SENATE SÉNAT
CANADA

Opening the Door: Reducing Barriers to Post-Secondary Education in Canada

Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology

The Honourable Kelvin K. Ogilvie
Chair

The Honourable Art Eggleton, P.C.
Deputy Chair

December 2011

For more information please contact us
by email SOC-AFF-SOC@sen.parl.gc.ca
by phone: (613) 990-0088
toll-free: 1 800 267-7362
by mail: The Standing Senate committee on
Social Affairs, Science and Technology
Senate, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1A 0A4
This report can be downloaded at:
www.senate-senat.ca/social.asp

Ce rapport est également offert en français

Table of Contents

Order of Reference

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate*, Tuesday, June 21, 2011:

The Honourable Senator Ogilvie moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Patterson:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology be authorized to examine and report on the accessibility of post-secondary education in Canada, including but not limited to:

(*a*) analysis of the current barriers in post-secondary education, such as geography, family income levels, means of financing for students, debt levels and challenges faced specifically by Aboriginal students;

(*b*) evaluation of the current mechanisms for students to fund post-secondary education, such as Canada Student Loans Program, Canada Student Grants Program, Canada Access Grants, funding for Aboriginal students, Canada Learning Bonds, and Registered Education Savings Plans;

(*c*) evaluation of the current mechanisms to fund scientific research and development in post-secondary and related institutions and the commercialization of such research;

(*d*) examination of the current federal/provincial transfer mechanism for post-secondary education;

(*e*) evaluation of the potential establishment of a dedicated transfer for post-secondary education; and

(*f*) any other matters related to the study;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee on this subject during the Fortieth Parliament be referred to the committee; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than December 31, 2011, and that the committee retain until June 30, 2012, all powers necessary to publicize its findings.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Gary W. O'Brien

Clerk of the Senate

Members

The Honourable Kelvin Kenneth Ogilvie, Chair
The Honourable Art Eggleton, P.C., Deputy Chair

The Honourable Senators:
David Braley
Catherine S. Callbeck
Andrée Champagne, P.C.
Jane Cordy
Jacques Demers
Lillian Eva Dyck
Yonah Martin
Pana Merchant
Judith Seidman
Josée Verner

Ex Officio Members:
The Honourable Senators Marjory LeBreton, P.C. (or Gerald Comeau) and James Cowan (or Claudette Tardif).

Other Senators who have participated from time to time in the study:
The Honourable Senators Brazeau, Dawson, Di Nino, Eaton, Fairbairn, Frum, Greene, Hubley, Keon, Mercer, Nancy, Peterson, Plett, Raine, Rivard, Runciman and Stewart Olsen.

Parliamentary Information and Research Services, Library of Parliament:
Daniel Thompson, analyst
Havi Echenberg, analyst

Clerk of the committee:
Jessica Richardson

Senate committees Directorate:
Diane McMartin, administrative assistant

List of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1
The committee recommends that the federal government, in conjunction with the Council of Ministers of Education encourage and support efforts to reduce the drop-out rate in secondary education, including the establishment of targets and time-lines, with regular reporting on progress.

RECOMMENDATION 2
The committee recommends that the federal government convene a meeting of provincial and territorial ministers of education to develop a strategy to address the non-financial factors (such as socioeconomic issues, family environment and K-12 education) in order to ultimately encourage all young Canadians to pursue post-secondary education.

RECOMMENDATION 3
The committee recommends that the federal government work together with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, to improve the information about post-secondary education provided to Canadians, including primary and secondary school students and their parents, and that the information provided include the following:

a) the costs and benefits of obtaining a post-secondary diploma or degree;
b) information about financial assistance, including eligibility criteria as well as the terms of loan repayment and forgiveness; and
c) an overview of the complete range of educational programs available, including trade schools, apprenticeships, and college and university programs.

RECOMMENDATION 4
The committee recommends that the federal government examine mechanisms to incent small and medium-sized Canadian businesses to encourage and support the continuing education and training of their employees.

RECOMMENDATION 5
The committee recommends that the federal government work with municipal, provincial and territorial governments, private sector, voluntary sector, and non-governmental organizations to encourage and strengthen adult and family literacy programs with the goal of helping Canadians develop the skills necessary to access post-secondary education.

RECOMMENDATION 6
The committee recommends that all partners in education examine carefully the current education system to identify how it is failing boys and how to ensure that they are in the best position to access post-secondary education.

RECOMMENDATION 7
The committee recommends that the Government of Canada work with First Nations to improve educational outcomes for students on reserve, by building on actions that have proven successful such as concluding tripartite agreements, to ensure that supports for First Nations students, including on reserve school funding, focuses on the shared goal of improved educational outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION 8
The committee recommends that the federal government evaluate its aid to Aboriginal post-secondary programs and institutions, including skills training, and consult with organizations that represent Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions in order to determine whether or not the allocation to ISSP is adequate to develop a funding method for the Program that is based on the genuine financial needs of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 9
The committee recommends that the 2% cap on funding increases for post secondary education programs administered by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada in effect since 1996-be reviewed immediately such that the funds allocated to the Post Secondary Student Support Program reflect the real needs of Aboriginal Students and are administered through an open, transparent and fully accountable distribution mechanism.

RECOMMENDATION 10
The committee recommends that the federal government invite national Aboriginal organizations, Aboriginal student groups, and Aboriginal students to formally participate in an evaluation of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program through an advisory committee.

RECOMMENDATION 11
The committee recommends that the federal government consider ways to ensure Métis and non-status First Nations have access to post-secondary training, and include consideration of the creation of a national scholarship and bursary fund for Métis and for non-status First Nations.

RECOMMENDATION 12
The committee recommends that the federal government expand the access to post-secondary education provided by its student financial assistance programs, with the following measures that shall take into account the principles and mechanisms found in existing bilateral agreements with the province of Quebec, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut:

a) continue its efforts to harmonize the various financial assistance programs and to work closely with the provinces and territories to accomplish this goal;
b) conduct regular reviews of the following limits, taking into account real costs including inflation, and differences among jurisdictions: loan limits; the limit placed on student employment income, and financial assistance limits under the Canada Student Grants Program;
c) conduct regular reviews of student aid programs, particularly with respect to their impact on debt and financial capacity compared with the programs they replaced;

d) apply the interest exemption under the Canada Student Loans Program during the first six months following graduation;
e) reduce student interest rates to prime;
f) revise the funding level for disability assessments in order to cover the full cost of the assessment;
g) review the eligibility criteria for the Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities and the Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities to ensure they cover the additional costs faced by people with disabilities; and
h) establish a relocation grant for low-income students who must leave the parental home to pursue post-secondary studies.

RECOMMENDATION 13
The committee recommends that the federal government conduct an immediate review of the effectiveness of all education tax credits in increasing the accessibility of post-secondary education. The review should include an assessment of their effectiveness in increasing participation by under-represented groups and present various options for reallocating ineffective tax credits to other financial assistance programs.

RECOMMENDATION 14
The committee recommends that the federal government examine the possibility of allowing charitable organizations to raise funds intended to contribute to a Registered Education Savings Plan established for a child from a low-income family.

RECOMMENDATION 15
The committee recommends that the federal government promote the creation of lasting jobs for apprentices and qualified journeypersons through tools for encouraging cooperation with the private sector, including those provided by the Sector Council Programs that bridge between apprenticeship and employment.

RECOMMENDATION 16
The committee recommends that the eligibility criteria for Canada Graduate Scholarships for low- and middle-income families be changed so that graduate students qualify. The programs' budgets should be increased accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION 17
The committee recommends that the federal government maintain the Vanier Graduate Scholarships Program so that the program can compete effectively with the world's top scholarship programs.

RECOMMENDATION 18
The committee recommends that Industry Canada review existing industrial post-doctoral fellowship programs, especially the "Elevate" program, with a view to identifying "best-practice" examples and expanding support for such programs.

RECOMMENDATION 19
The committee recommends that 5% of federal funding for pure and applied research be allocated to colleges and technical institutes to develop and commercialize products.

RECOMMENDATION 20
The committee recommends that the federal government, through the granting agencies, conduct a review of the allocation mechanisms used by the various research funds in order to ensure that smaller universities are not disadvantaged.

RECOMMENDATION 21
The committee recommends that funding for indirect research costs be increased to an internationally competitive level of 40% of direct grants.

RECOMMENDATION 22
The committee recommends that the federal government work with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, to develop and implement a national strategy for post-secondary education that includes the following:

a) the removal of postsecondary education funding from the Canada Social Transfer and the creation of an independent Canada Education and Training Transfer to ensure that there is dedicated funding for postsecondary education and training;
b) general targets for participation in post-secondary education and specific targets for under-represented groups;
c) a standardized data collection and reporting mechanism for monitoring and evaluating progress toward the participation targets;
d) a national credit-recognition program between colleges and universities, and between institutions in different provinces;
e) wider use of the prior learning and skills recognition process when establishing eligibility criteria for post-secondary programs;
f) a national plan to support online learning and integrate new technologies in post-secondary education;
g) increased funding for research into the factors that influence participation in and completion of post-secondary education;
h) a budget envelope to fund pilot projects and rigorous evaluations of approaches to increasing access to post-secondary education for under-represented groups. and for sharing the best practices among them;
i) a strategy to promote technical training and the trades; and
j) based on success in enhancing the accountability of a dedicated PSE Transfer account, the Federal government consider increasing the Transfer funding using the 1994 levels as a target.

Acronyms

AANDC	Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada Canada
ACCC	Association of Canadian Community Colleges
ACG	Apprenticeship Completion Grant
AFN	Assembly of First Nations
AIG	Apprenticeship Incentive Grant
AUCC	Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
AUFC	Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne
AVID	Advancement Via Individual Determination
CADSPPE	Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education
CAF	Canadian Apprenticeship Forum
CAP	Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
CASA	Canadian Alliance of Student Associations
CASFAA	Canadian Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
CBIE	Canadian Bureau for International Education
CCL	Canada Council on Learning
CESG	Canada Education Savings Grant
CFI	Canada Foundation for Innovation
CFS	Canadian Federation of Students
CIHR	Canadian Institutes of Health Research
CMEC	Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
CMSF	Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CSGP	Canada Student Grants Program
CSLP	Canada Student Loans Program
CST	Canada Social Transfer
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
ISSP	Indian Studies Support Program
K-12	Kindergarten to Grade 12
MNC	Métis National Council
NAAF	National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation
NSERC	Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PSE	Post-secondary education
PSSSP	Post-Secondary Student Support Program
QFUS	Quebec Federation of University Students
R&D	Research and Development
RAP	Repayment Assistance Plan

RESP	Registered Education Savings Plan
SEUR	Sensibilisation aux études universitaires et à la recherche
SRDC	Social Research and Demonstration Corporation
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

1 — Introduction

The Senate's last report on post-secondary education (PSE) was published in 1997.[1] The Special Senate Committee on Post-Secondary Education, chaired by Senator Lorne Bonnell, concluded that Canada needed to put in place a PSE system in which barriers such as cost, location and disability would not prevent students with the necessary ability and determination from pursuing a post-secondary education.[2] According to the committee's members, the importance of post-secondary education was obvious:

> *As we advance further into "the Information Age" we shall become increasingly dependent, both for our domestic well-being and for our international competitiveness, on the knowledge that results from research and development performed in our post-secondary educational institutions, on the knowledge workers whom they graduate, and on the opportunities they provide for lifelong learning to upgrade the knowledge and skills of our citizens striving to remain productive contributors within an environment characterized by escalating change.* [3]

Many things have changed since 1997. Tuition fees have increased in most provinces, and students have accrued more debt. Canadian universities have seen a significant increase in enrolment, as well as a rise in the number of international students.

Our knowledge of the key factors that influence participation and achievement in PSE has also grown considerably. It is now acknowledged that non-financial obstacles such as preparation for school, student motivation and parental influence are as significant as cost. In fact, the cost of post-secondary education becomes an issue only if these non-financial barriers are overcome in the first place. At the same time, the mechanisms through which the federal government funds PSE have also changed: investments in research within post-secondary institutions have increased considerably and the structure of federal-provincial transfer programs has been modified, as has funding available directly to students. Given the many changes, a new study on the accessibility of post-secondary education in Canada was necessary. The Standing

[1] Senate, Special Committee on Post-Secondary Education, *A Senate Report on Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, December 1997, http://www.parl.gc.ca/36/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/post-e/rep-e/repfinaldec97-e.htm, accessed 18 June 2010.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid*.

Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology decided to examine this most important issue.

1.1 — The committee's approach

From October 2009 to June 2010, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology held 19 meetings on the accessibility of post-secondary education in Canada, heard from 69 witnesses and received many briefs. The committee looked at PSE as a whole and did not limit the study to financial factors. It called on economists, statisticians, analysts and researchers to identify barriers to PSE. After reviewing the most recent research findings on the subject, the committee extended its study to include stakeholders such as student associations, groups representing post-secondary institutions and people working to improve the accessibility of PSE for under-represented groups. This approach enabled committee members to broaden the debate to include a wide range of issues that are usually overshadowed by the cost of PSE and student debt. The committee also focused on all forms of PSE, i.e., both academic and applied programs offered by universities, colleges, trade schools and apprenticeship programs.

As indicated in the Order of Reference, while the committee focused mainly on the accessibility of post-secondary education, it also wished to study other related matters, including research funding in post-secondary institutions and the Canada Social Transfer (CST).

1.2 — Background

1.2.1 — Jurisdiction over post-secondary education in Canada

In Canada, education falls under provincial jurisdiction. Section 93 of the *Constitution Act, 1867,* states that "[i]n and for each Province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education".[4] As a result, each province and territory is responsible for organizing, delivering and evaluating education within its borders, from primary to post-secondary levels. However, pursuant to section 91 of the Constitution, the federal government is responsible for

[4] *Constitution Act, 1867* (UK), 30 & 31 Victoria, c. 3.

the education of First Nations people on reserve, members of the armed forces and their families, and inmates of federal correctional institutions, among others.[5]

The federal government's role for primary and secondary education is limited to these specific groups (e.g., education of First Nations on reserve), but is more flexible with regard to PSE. For example, the federal government is involved in PSE by indirectly funding the provincial PSE systems through transfer payments, financing research through granting councils, and supporting students through the Canada Student Loans Program. Federal involvement in PSE is based on the government's significant responsibility for national economic policy, human resource development and citizens' mobility between provinces.[6]

Given that education falls mainly under provincial jurisdiction, educational systems vary significantly from one province to another (see Figure 1). In total, Canada has approximately 95 public and private not-for-profit universities and university-degree-level colleges,[7] and 175 community colleges, although they are not distributed equally across provinces and regions (see Figure 2).[8] In addition, there are more than 400 for-profit "career colleges" in nine provinces.[9]

In general, Canadian universities have a great deal of freedom to establish their own admissions standards and degree requirements, and manage their finances as they see fit. Governments' roles are limited to providing funding and establishing fee structures.[10] The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) states that government involvement is more

[5] Marc Leman, *Post-Secondary Education: The Role of the Federal Government*, Library of Parliament, Background Paper, BP-140E, February 1986, p. 1.
[6] Donald Fisher et al., *Canadian Federal Policy and Postsecondary Education*, The Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training, 2006, p. 3, http://www.chet.educ.ubc.ca/ pdf_files/Canadian_Federal_Policy.pdf, accessed 21 June 2010.
[7] Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *About AUCC*, http://www.aucc.ca/about_us/index_e.html, accessed 15 July 2010.
[8] Association of Canadian Community Colleges, *Colleges*, http://www.accc.ca/english/colleges/trainingnetwork.htm, accessed 15 July 2010.
[9] National Association of Career Colleges, "NACC Membership." http://www.nacc.ca/w_membership.aspx? Accessed 24 January 2011.
[10] Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), *Education in Canada*, July 2008, p. 6, http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/64/EducationCanada.en.pdf, accessed 29 July 2010.

pronounced with regard to colleges and "can extend to admissions policies, program approval, curricula, institutional planning, and working conditions."[11]

This context must be taken into account when examining PSE. While the federal government plays an important role in PSE, it shares the field with the provinces. Therefore, this report focuses on the federal government's involvement in PSE and how PSE can be made more accessible using the tools available to this level of government.

1.2.2. Reporting data

The committee notes that statistics related to post-secondary education are complex. Different statistical and research agencies use different measures of completion and non-completion of different levels of secondary and post-secondary education. Because these statistics can often seem contradictory, the committee provides the following table to clarify definitions and statistics that will appear in this report.

[11] *Ibid.*

Table 1 – Definitions and measures of completion and non-completion

Group	Age	Year	Secondary graduation	Secondary non-completion	PSE qualification	PSE graduation	Bachelor degree	University degree
Canadians	25-64	2008				49%[12]		
Canadians	25-34	2006						29%[13]
People in Canada	20-24	2009-2010		9%[14]				
Non-disabled people in Canada	25-64	2006		13.5%[15]				
People in Canada	25-64	2006			61%[16]			
Canadian-born		2006						20%[17]
Under-graduate students in Canada		2008 (for that year only)					34.4%[18]	
Students in publicly funded secondary school		2007-2008	71%					
Non-Aboriginal people in Canada		2006						23%[19]

Source: Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, 2008, http://www.cicic.ca/docs/cmec/EducationCanada2008.en.pdf

[12] OECD, *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, 2010, p. 36, http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/45/39/45926093.pdf, accessed 17 February 2011.
[13] Statistics Canada, "Education, Training and Learning." http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-402-x/2010000/chap/edu/edu-eng.htm accessed 9 August 2011.
[14] Canadian Council on Learning, *2009-2010 State of Learning in Canada: A Year in Review*, 30 March 2010, p. 23, http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/SOLR/2010/SOLR-2010-Report-FINAL-E.pdf, accessed 17 February 2011.
[15] Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *2009 Federal Disability Report*: *Advancing the Inclusion of People with Disabilities*, 2009, p. 27, http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/reports/fdr/2009/fdr_2009.pdf, accessed 12 July 2010.
[16] *Ibid*., p. 9. Note: This figure includes: trades certificate, college diploma, university certificate or diploma below bachelor level, and university degree.
[17] Statistics Canada, *Educational Portrait of Canada, 2006 Census*, March 2008, p. 6, http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-560/pdf/97-560-XIE2006001.pdf, accessed 17 February 2011.
[18] OECD, 2010, p. 68
[19] *Ibid*., p. 19

. Figure 1 – Canada's Education Systems

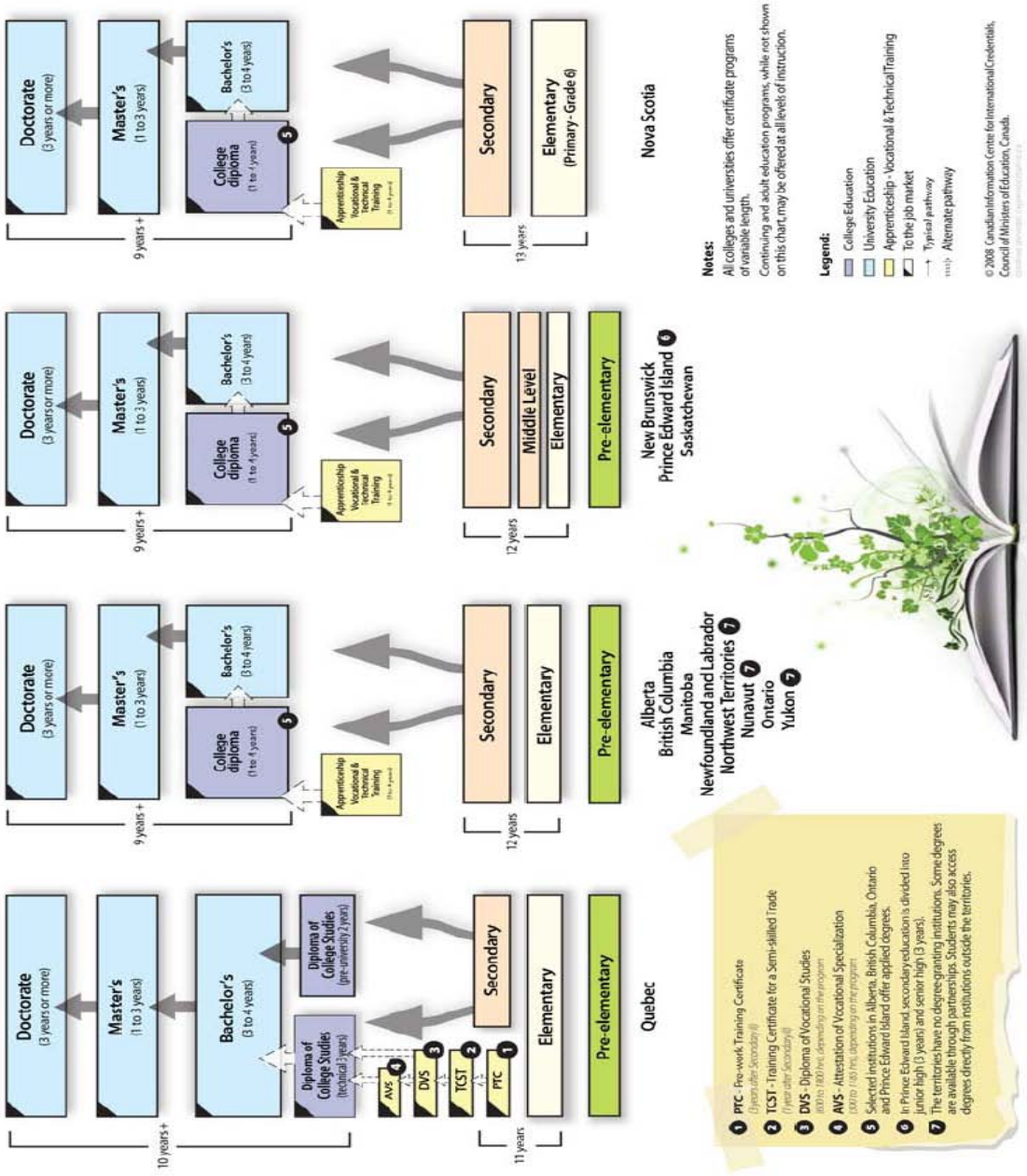
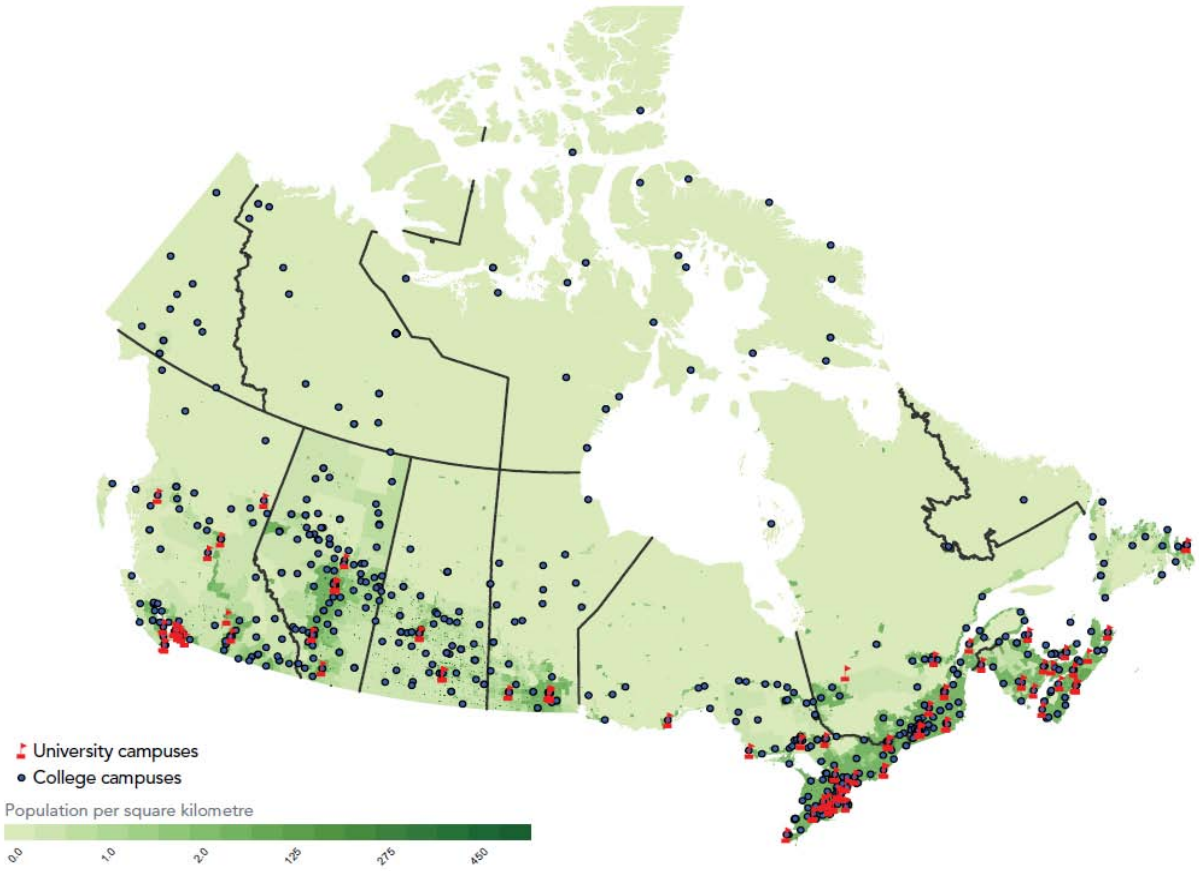


Figure 2 – Geographic Distribution of Not-for-Profit PSE Institutions



Source: Canadian Council on Learning, *Post-Secondary Education in Canada: Meeting our Needs?*, February 2009, p. 24, http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/PSE/2009/PSE2008_English.pdf, accessed 6 December 2010.

1.2.3 — The importance of post-secondary education for Canada

Post-secondary education plays a key role in a country's development. It impacts both individuals and society as a whole. Individuals are more employable if they have higher levels of education.[20] In 2007, the employment rate for those who did not graduate from high school was 57%, while it was 83% for college and university graduates. This is not a new trend: job opportunities for PSE graduates have improved considerably over the last 20 years. From 1990 to 2010, the number of jobs for PSE graduates more than doubled to 4.4 million. In contrast, for those with a high school diploma or less, the number of jobs declined by 1.2 million in the same

[20] Statistics Canada and CMEC, *Education Indicators in Canada: An International Perspective*, Ottawa, 2009, p. 41.

time period.[21] On average, individuals aged 40 to 59 with a university degree earned twice the income of those who had not finished high school, and 50% more than those with college diplomas.[22]

The testimony of Paul Davidson, President and CEO of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) illustrates the impact of PSE on job opportunities:

> *[…] from August 2008 to August 2009—the depth of the worst recession this country has faced—there were 40,000 net new jobs for university graduates. There were, however, 370,000 fewer jobs for those without a higher education degree or qualification.*[23]

Post-secondary education can also be very profitable for society as a whole. For member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), each additional year of full-time education is associated with an increase in output per capita of about 6%.[24]

The advantages of having an educated population are not only economic. People with more education tend to be in better health. In 2005, 67% of Canada's post-secondary graduates considered themselves to be in "very good" or "excellent" health, compared with only 43% of those without a high school diploma.[25] Education also seems to have an impact on life satisfaction.[26] Moreover, those with at least some post-secondary education are twice as likely to vote as those with only a high school diploma, and are four times as likely to vote as those who did not finish high school.[27]

These figures highlight only a few of the considerable benefits that come from having an educated population. In light of these findings, Canada should be doing everything in its power

---

[21] Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *Trends in Higher Education, Volume 1 Enrolment*, 2011. p 32., http://www.aucc.ca/_pdf/english/publications/trends-2011-vol1-enrolment-e.pdf accessed 21 June 201.
[22] *Ibid*. p. 126.
[23] *Evidence*, 7 October 2009, Paul Davidson.
[24] Paulo Santiago et al., *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society, Volume 1, Special Features: Governance, Funding, Quality*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2008, p. 39.
[25] Canadian Council on Learning, *2009-2010 State of Learning in Canada: A Year in Review*, 30 March 2010, p. 37, http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/SOLR/2010/SOLR-2010-Report-FINAL-E.pdf, accessed 22 June 2010.
[26] *Ibid*.
[27] *Ibid*.

to improve the rates of completion of secondary education in programs that permit and thus improve access to PSE.

1.2.4 — Current situation

Canada has one of the most educated populations in the world. In 2008, Canada had the highest proportion of tertiary graduates of all OECD countries: 49% of Canadians aged 25 to 64 were college or university graduates.[28] When graduates of other post-secondary programs, such as vocational training and apprenticeship programs, are included, the percentage increases to 60% of the population.[29]

The most recent Statistics Canada data indicate that 1,112,300 students were enrolled in Canadian universities during the 2008–2009 academic year, up 3.7% from the previous year. [30] Table 2 shows university enrolment by province from 2004–2005 to 2008–2009.

[28] OECD, *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, 2010, p. 36, http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/45/39/45926093.pdf, accessed 17 December 2010.
[29] Statistics Canada, *Highest level of educational attainment for the population aged 25 to 64, percentage distribution for both sexes, for Canada, provinces and territories - 20% sample data*, http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-560/pages/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&Code=01&Table=1&Data=Dist&Sex=1&StartRec=1&Sort=2&Display=Page, accessed 17 December 2010.
[30] Statistics Canada, "University enrolment," *The Daily*, 14 July 2010, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/100714/dq100714a-eng.htm, accessed 15 July 2010.
Note that part of this increase is due to changes in the designation of some post-secondary institutions in British Columbia. According to Statistics Canada, "The addition of five universities in British Columbia contributed to the increase of students enrolled in other educational activities offered in the universities, from 92,823 in 2007–2008 to 119,796 in 2008–2009."

Table 2 – University Enrolment* by Province

	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Canada	**1,021,521**	**1,050,225**	**1,066,905**	**1,072,488**	**1,112,370**
Newfoundland and Labrador	18,048	18,336	17,811	17,523	17,322
Prince Edward Island	3,972	3,849	3,999	3,837	4,089
Nova Scotia	43,539	43,308	42,456	41,442	40,899
New Brunswick	24,903	25,014	23,757	23,682	23,028
Quebec	263,397	265,995	266,712	268,011	269,097
Ontario	413,406	431,049	440,604	446,196	448,467
Manitoba	39,285	39,615	40,119	38,964	39,306
Saskatchewan**	33,126	20,622	20,604	20,607	19,647
Alberta	89,124	91,665	94,131	94,659	93,774
British Columbia	92,724	110,775	116,709	117,561	156,741

* Includes part-time and full-time students. Totals may not add due to rounding.

** For University of Regina, enrolments since 2005/2006 are not available. According to the AUCC's preliminary numbers, enrolments at the University of Regina during the fall of 2009 was 11,890.

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM, Table 477-0013 (for fee)

Despite the increase in university enrolment in Canada, there are some troubling indicators. According to data from *Education at a Glance 2010*, Canada is ranked 20th among OECD countries for graduation rates in undergraduate university education. Its rate of 34.4% is below the OECD average of 39%.[31] Furthermore, trends over a longer period show that Canada is losing momentum. Patrice de Broucker, chief of Education Indicators and Special Projects at Statistics Canada told committee members that the rate of increase in the number of university graduates over a 10-year period in Canada is lower than the average increase for OECD countries:

> *As for the younger generation, 29 per cent of Canadians between 25 and 34 years of age hold a university degree. An increase, to be sure, but that still puts us in twelfth place among OECD countries for this population. Countries such as Korea, Finland, Denmark, Australia and Sweden now have passed*

[31] OECD, 2010, p. 68.

> *Canada, while other countries like Japan and the United Kingdom are on a par with Canada.*[32]

The slow growth in university graduation rates can be partially explained by Canada's growing college sector. Countries with strong college systems and high college enrolment rates generally have weaker university graduation rates than countries without college systems.[33] Since labour market needs across Canada are not limited to university graduates but include all levels of post-secondary education and the skills they provide, the committee recognizes the strength of Canada's college sector. However, some stakeholders were concerned that Canada's college system will not be able to meet the demand for specialized training.[34] The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) pointed out that waiting lists are preventing students from timely registration for many college programs. Some community colleges have a two-year waiting list.[35] The unavailability of places in some programs represents a barrier to access in itself. Table 3 shows college enrolment from 2002–2003 to 2006–2007.

The committee notes that the college system represents an important asset to the PSE opportunity for Canadians and urges the Federal Government to emphasize expanding the community college system in its discussion with the provinces, including discussions on the Canada Social Transfer so as to better meet the demand for college programs.

[32] *Evidence*, 7 October 2009, Patrice de Broucker.
[33] Canadian Council on Learning, 2009, p. 36.
[34] *Evidence*, 5 May 2010, Terry Anne Boyles.
[35] *Ibid*.

Table 3 – College Enrolment* by Province and Territory

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Canada	**571,962**	**607,431**	**606,258**	**602,802**	**609,051**
Newfoundland and Labrador	7,860	7,779	6,561	8,982	8,973
Prince Edward Island	1,800	1,797	1,290	1,620	1,557
Nova Scotia	7,950	7,662	7,677	8,013	8,547
New Brunswick	6,270	6,501	8,040	7,278	6,975
Quebec	195,507	190,809	189,168	185,394	188,067
Ontario	168,324	206,988	203,007	216,252	215,496
Manitoba	8,463	8,841	8,733	8,931	9,051
Saskatchewan	3,852	4,020	3,840	3,837	7,341
Alberta	53,073	54,246	59,865	60,480	60,510
British Columbia	117,387	117,369	116,592	100,701	101,505
Yukon	540	522	501	501	201
Northwest Territories	522	507	531	531	531
Nunavut	420	390	459	285	297

* Includes part-time and full-time students. Totals may not add due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM, Table 477-0015 (for fee)

According to recent Statistics Canada data, there were 403,490 people registered in apprenticeship training programs in 2009,[36] which is an increase of more than 100% compared with 1997 levels. However, in 2009, only 30,858 people finished their apprenticeship training, which represents a very low completion rate.[37] Persistence and completion are important aspects of accessibility to PSE. We therefore recognize that there are sizeable challenges for all levels of PSE.

Canada needs qualified people at every educational level. According to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), approximately 5.5 million jobs will need to be filled in Canada by 2015 due to retirements (3.8 million) and job creation (1.7 million).[38] Two-thirds of these jobs will require post-secondary education or be at the management level.

[36] Statistics Canada, Table 477-0053 Registered apprenticeship training, registrations, by age groups, sex and major trade groups, annual.
[37] Statistics Canada, Table 477-0054 Registered apprenticeship training, completions, by age groups, sex and major trade groups, annual
[38] Mario Lapointe et al., *Looking-Ahead: A 10-Year Outlook for the Canadian Labour Market (2006-2015)*, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Ottawa, October 2006, p. 54.

The Canadian labour market will need approximately 1.4 million additional university graduates and slightly more than 2 million college or vocational school graduates by 2015.[39]

[39] Canadian Council on Learning, 2009, p. 115.

2 — Barriers to Post-secondary Education in Canada

It is clear to the committee that, despite the high educational attainment of its population, Canada has a vested interest in thoroughly examining the accessibility of post-secondary education (PSE) or it could find itself at a disadvantage internationally. But how do we improve the situation in a country with one of the most educated populations in the world? The committee suggests that this can be achieved by focusing our efforts on groups that, relative to their proportion of the population, are under-represented in post-secondary educational institutions. As Professor Dale Kirby of Memorial University of Newfoundland explained, "to grow our post-secondary enrolments further we must have public policy that is specifically designed to address the impediments to participation for Canadians who have traditionally been excluded."[40] These groups include, among others, Aboriginal peoples, disabled persons, "first–generation" students,[41] students from rural or remote areas, and students from low-income families. To improve access to PSE for these groups, we must first understand the barriers they face.

2.1 — Non-financial barriers

The committee hearings revealed an inescapable reality regarding factors that influence accessibility of post-secondary education in Canada. Although financial issues often garner all the attention, it seems that non-financial barriers play a very important role. In fact, as Ross Finnie of the University of Ottawa explained, "access is clearly the outcome of a detailed, complex, interrelated set of factors that begins to operate early in a young person's life and depends heavily on family background and early schooling experiences."[42] In this section, we will examine factors other than student finances.

[40] *Evidence*, 25 March 2010, Dale Kirby.

[41] This term is used widely in the literature to refer to students whose parents did not attend post-secondary education. For example, see Dr. Dale Kirby, « Reviewing Canadian Post-Secondary Education: Post-Secondary Education Policy in Post-Industrial Canada, » *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, Issue #65, November 3, 2007 https://www.umanitoba.ca/publications/cjeap/articles/kirby.html Accessed 12 January 2011.

[42] *Evidence*, 8 October 2009, Ross Finnie.

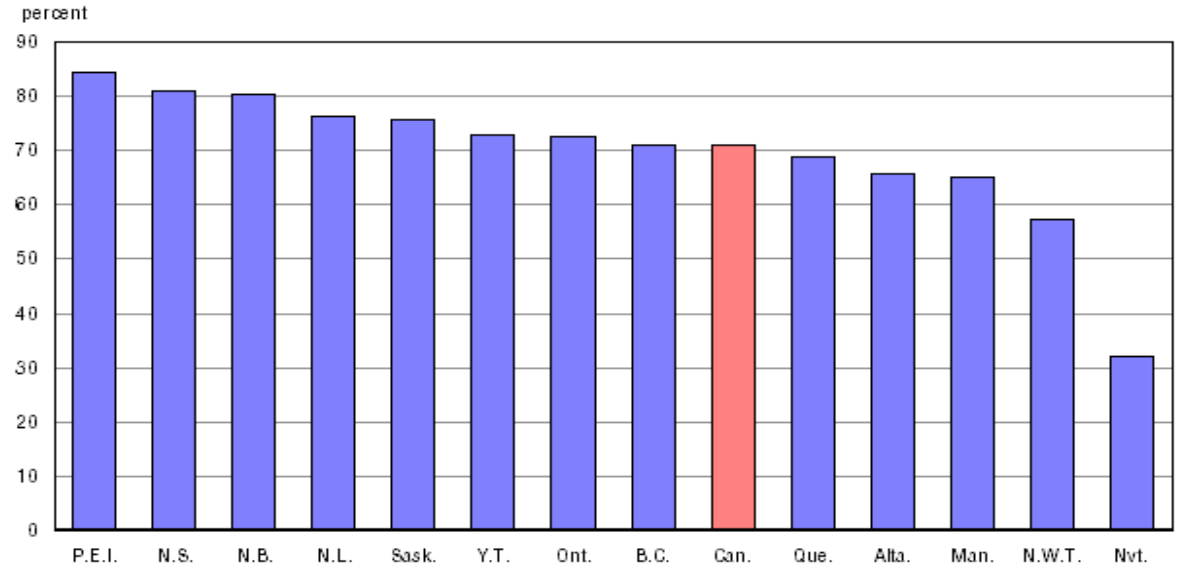
2.1.1 — Attainment of high school diploma

The committee did not specifically study the issue of high school graduation. However, as the failure to graduate from high school is an obvious barrier for young Canadians who wish to continue their education, it is relevant that we consider the issue.

> *If we want more participation, and more equitable participation, we need to improve high school graduation rates, because the students who do not graduate are also the students who are least likely to ... enter tertiary education.*[43]

According to recent Statistics Canada data,[44] the high school graduation rate for public schools was 71% in 2007–2008. The rate varies greatly from province to province. Prince Edward Island posted the highest rate with 84.3%, whereas Manitoba had the lowest rate with 65.1% (see Figure 3). Nunavut's graduation rate was only 32%. However, it was the first time that it had exceeded 30%.

Figure 3 — Secondary Graduation Rates, Canada, Provinces and Territories 2007–2008



Source: Statistics Canada, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2010083-eng.pdf (accessed 28 June 2010).

[43] *Evidence,* 5 November 2009, Ben Levin.
[44] Riley Brockington, *Summary Public School Indicators for Canada, the Provinces and Territories,2001/2002 to 2007/2008*, May 2010, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2010083-eng.pdf, accessed 28 June 2010.

An increase in the high school completion rate can only help to improve PSE participation rates. The proportion of the Canadian population between the ages of 20 and 24 who have dropped out of school has been cut in half from 16.6% in 1990-1991 to 8.5% in 2009-2010.[45] Despite this net improvement, the fact remains that poor students, disabled students, and young members of visible minorities and Aboriginal groups are over-represented among youth who do not complete their secondary education.[46] The committee is well aware of this fact. In its report, *In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness*, completed in 2009, the committee noted the low graduation rate of these disadvantaged groups. The committee would like to emphasize here the importance of increasing secondary school graduation rates and reiterates a recommendation already made in the above-mentioned report.[47]

RECOMMENDATION 1

The committee recommends that the federal government, in conjunction with the Council of Ministers of Education encourage and support efforts to reduce the drop-out rate in secondary education, including the establishment of targets and time-lines, with regular reporting on progress.

2.1.2 — Secondary school experience and grades

In addition to the issue of high school completion, we must also consider how students' experiences while in primary and secondary education motivate them to continue with post-secondary education. Many factors are involved. Secondary school performance (as measured by standard tests, marks, perseverance, and whether or not students are streamed to technical or general programs) is an important factor for motivating students to continue with post-secondary education. Students with good results are generally more likely to consider pursuing post-secondary education.

The committee recognizes the importance of ensuring that young people graduating from high school are adequately prepared to enter post-secondary education. Graduating from high

[45] Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, "Indicators of Well-Being:Learning – School Drop-outs, http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/.3ndic.1t.4r@-eng.jsp?iid=32 .
[46] Jodene Dunleavy, *Public Education in Canada: Facts, Trends and Attitudes*, Canadian Education Association, 2007, p. 5, http://www.cea-ace.ca/media/en/CEA-ACE_PubEd.07_E_FinalWEB.pdf, accessed 2 June 2010.
[47] Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness*, 2nd Session, 40th Parliament, December 2009, p. 58, http://www.parl.gc.ca/40/2/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/citi-e/rep-e/rep02dec09-e.pdf, accessed 28 June 2010.

school is not always sufficient to access PSE. To enter many university programs, foundational knowledge in mathematics and science is necessary. However, students who registered in inappropriate courses or who are streamed in specific sequences of courses may see their chances of accessing some PSE programs limited. Research published by Statistics Canada indicates that students whose parents had not completed a university education were more likely to have been "streamed" into programs that limited their qualifications and therefore access to a full range of PSE programs.[48]

2.1.3 — Family environment and first-generation students

The environment in which students grow up is very important. Most analysts find that the level of education of parents and their attitude towards post-secondary education are crucial. In fact, studies show that the proportion of youth who obtain a post-secondary degree goes up as parental education increases.[49] Furthermore, youth are much more likely to attend college or university if their parents believe in the importance of post-secondary education than if they do not.[50] Our witnesses confirmed that "the main factor is the parents' level of education; the environment in which one grows up is the most important thing."[51]

This brings us to a discussion of another under-represented group. First-generation students—the children of parents with no post-secondary education—are significantly less likely to continue with post-secondary education after high school. Some research indicates that approximately 17% of children whose parents have a high school education or less go on to university compared to about 50% for children with university-educated parents.[52] Several witnesses addressed this issue and explained how the parents' level of education influences the probability of continuing with post-secondary education. Parents with a college or university

[48] Harvey Krahn and Alsion Taylor, "Streaming in the 10th grade in four Canadian provinces in 2000", *Education Matters: Insights on Education, Learning and Training in Canada*, Vol. 4 no. 2, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2007002/9994-eng.htm, accessed 4 January 2011.
[49] Danielle Shaienks and Tomasz Gluszynski, *Education and Labour Market Transitions in Young Adulthood*, Research Paper, Statistics Canada, July 2009, p. 31, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2009075-eng.pdf, accessed 29 June 2010.
[50] Danielle Shaienks et al., *Postsecondary Education – Participation and Dropping Out: Differences Across University, College and Other Types of Postsecondary Institutions*, Statistics Canada, November 2008, p. 17, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2008070-eng.pdf, accessed 29 June 2010.
[51] *Evidence*, 7 October 2009, Patrice de Broucker.
[52] Marie Drolet, *Participation in Post-secondary Education in Canada: Has the Role of Parental Income and Education Changed over the 1990s?*, Statistics Canada, February 2005, p. 17, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2005243-eng.pdf, accessed 5 July 2010.

education are more familiar with the environment and more likely to guide their children in the decision-making process. Ben Levin of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education told the committee:

> *Some evidence suggests that students do not make use of school guidance counsellors and that their decisions are mainly made between themselves and their parents and friends. If your friends and parents do not know anything about university, you are unlikely to consider it as an option.*[53]

Furthermore, parents with a post-secondary degree are generally more knowledgeable about financing mechanisms available to students. Richard Mueller, visiting fellow at Statistics Canada, told the committee:

> *If you have a parent who has gone to university, they know what scholarships, loans and bursaries are and how to apply for these things, et cetera. If you do not come from that background, you will not have a clue. This may cause you to miscalculate the benefits and the costs of this type of education.*[54]

2.1.4 — Motivation and exposure to post-secondary education

> *There is clear evidence that aspirations have an effect on participation, independent of ability and achievement. Whether people see themselves participating in post-secondary education is important. Whether others encourage them to see themselves as participating is important. Aspiration is an area that needs attention.*[55]

The desire for a college or university education or for apprenticeship training must also be considered. Motivation is a determining factor.[56] In the case of first-generation students and youth from low-income families, among others, it may be difficult to spark this desire. However, these youth have the potential to pursue post-secondary studies, and we must ensure that they are motivated at a young age.[57]

The committee hearings were an opportunity to learn about many promising initiatives to increase the motivation of youth (see boxed text throughout the report for additional information

[53] *Evidence*, 5 November 2009, Ben Levin.
[54] *Evidence*, 8 October 2009, Richard E. Mueller.
[55] *Evidence*, 5 November 2009, Ben Levin.
[56] *Evidence*, 9 June 2010, Louis Dumont.
[57] *Evidence*, 8 October 2009, Ross Finnie.

about these initiatives). The committee heard about efforts to help students familiarize themselves with available post-secondary programs and to encourage first-generation students to continue in post-secondary studies. Witnesses described for the committee individual efforts to interest students in post-secondary education while still in high school.

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)

The goal of AVID is to help students whose educational performance and skills are not at the level necessary for admission to post-secondary studies. The program, modeled after the U.S. initiative, targets in particular the barriers of average school results, registration in inappropriate courses and lack of engagement. The goal is to reinforce the level of capacity and preparation for post-secondary education among targeted students.

It was tested in British Columbia, with the financial support of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, as part of a pilot project with 1,500 students. It essentially consists of an elective course offered to students who have the potential to continue with post-secondary education but who do not have the required marks. The students in this elective receive special training and the assistance of tutors, listen to speakers, and visit post-secondary educational institutions.

Preliminary results gathered by the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation indicate that participants in the AVID program took more difficult courses compared to equivalent students and achieved grades at or above the level they would have normally achieved in less demanding courses. In addition, students participating in AVID adopted learning strategies and techniques promoted by the AVID program. Final results are expected in 2012.

For more information, see AVID's website at http://www.avid.org/index.html.

In light of the non-financial barriers to post-secondary education outlined in this section, the committee feels it is of the upmost importance that all levels of government work collaboratively to ensure that young Canadians graduate from high school and be motivated to pursue post-secondary education.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The committee recommends that the federal government convene a meeting of provincial and territorial ministers of education to develop a strategy to address the non-financial factors (such as socioeconomic issues, family environment and K-12

education) in order to ultimately encourage all young Canadians to pursue post-secondary education.

The committee also encourages all governments to support and fund replication of programs that have demonstrated success, and to use their results as a benchmark for all such programs.

2.2 — Financial barriers

2.2.1 — Tuition fees

While the committee recognizes the urgency of overcoming non-financial barriers before financial barriers are even an issue, tuition fees are often central to any discussion of the accessibility of PSE. In the committee's study, this issue was raised by many witnesses, especially representatives of student associations.

Tuition fees for university programs have increased considerably over the past 10 years. On average, tuition for an undergraduate degree was just over $4,700 for the 2008–2009 academic year. Tuition fees have increased an average of 4.4% annually since 1998–1999. By comparison, inflation rose less quickly, averaging 2.3% annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).[58] In 2009–2010, tuition fees increased 3.6% while the CPI declined by 0.8%.[59] Statistics Canada reports that average tuition for undergraduates for 2009 varied from approximately $2,000 in Quebec to more than $5,000 in Nova Scotia.[60] Data for college tuition fees are more difficult to find. They rose from $915 to $1,481 between 1997–1998 and 2006–2007.[61]

The committee notes that there is strong disagreement over the impact of tuition increases on the accessibility of post-secondary education. Student groups steadfastly consider tuition fees to be one of the most important barriers to access. As the National Chairperson of the Canadian

---

[58] Statistics Canada, "University Tuition Fees," *The Daily*, 9 October 2008, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/081009/dq081009a-eng.htm, accessed 29 July 2010.
[59] *Ibid*.
[60] Statistics Canada, *Education Indicators in Canada: Spending on Postsecondary Education*, June 2011. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-599-x/81-599-x2011007-eng.pdf
[61] Joseph Berger, Anne Motte and Andrew Parkin, *The Price of Knowledge: Access and Student Knowledge in Canada*, Canada Millenium Scholarship Foundation, 2009, http://qspace.library.queensu.ca/bitstream/1974/5780/1/POKVol4_EN.pdf, p. 95.

Federation of Students (CFS) explained, "tuition fees are currently the single largest expense for most college and university students and are increasing more rapidly than any other cost faced by students."[62]

However, several experts and researchers do not agree. Ben Levin, a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto explained to the committee that tuition fees do not have as great an impact on accessibility as one might think:

> *The first thing to say about financing post-secondary education is that although all the attention tends to go to tuition fees, tuition fees, within reasonable ranges, appear to have little or no impact on participation rates.*[63]

He added that there is no empirical study showing that a decrease in tuition fees would significantly increase the rate of participation in post-secondary studies.[64] Therefore, the committee decided that it would not recommend that tuition fees be frozen or reduced. As the committee was told, "Reducing tuition fees […] would be a counterproductive policy because it would be quite expensive and have very little impact on participation or equity of participation."[65]

Nonetheless, the fact remains that students are worried about tuition increases. Studies also indicate that an increase in tuition fees can discourage participation in post-secondary education by certain groups that are at greater risk.[66] For example, after tuition fees for certain professional programs in Ontario were deregulated, university enrolment patterns changed substantially.[67]

The committee suggests that any tuition fee increase should be moderate and predictable in order to avoid sudden increases that inevitably would have an impact on PSE accessibility. The provincial government is responsible for regulating tuition fees. However, these fees form part of the financial costs barriers addressed later in this report.

---

[62] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard.
[63] *Evidence*, 5 November 2009, Ben Levin.
[64] *Ibid*.
[65] *Ibid*.
[66] *Ibid.*
[67] Marc Frenette, "University Access Amid Tuition Fee Deregulation: Evidence from Ontario Professional Programs," *Canadian Public Policy*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2008.

Explore Your Horizons

The goal of the Explore Your Horizons program is to address the information gap that could account for the divergence between students' perceptions of the benefits of education and the reality. This project focuses' on stimulating students' thinking about the possibility of careers or post-secondary education open to them and promotes informed decision-making. It was tested in 51 secondary schools in New Brunswick and Manitoba.

The information is presented through general and career workshops. In addition, workshops are led by "post-secondary ambassadors." This program also has a dedicated Web site. Interim evaluation results indicate that Explore Your Horizons helped increase the proportion of students who agreed that they needed to keep studying after high school to achieve what they wanted in life. It also helped reduce the proportion of participants from lower-income and lower education families who saw financial factors as a barrier to their PSE aspirations.

For more information, see an interim evaluation of the program at http://www.srdc.org/uploads/FTD_IIR_report_ENG.pdf

2.2.2 — Other expenses

Tuition fees are not the only expenses incurred by post-secondary students. According to the TD Bank, costs related solely to education for one year of an undergraduate program totalled $7,219 in 2008–2009.[68] These costs consist primarily of tuition fees, but also include additional mandatory university fees, books and school supplies, and the purchase of a computer. However, when costs not directly related to education (for example, transportation, clothing and food) are factored into the calculation, the average cost for a student living at home is $13,034.[69]

Students who must leave the family home to study spend even more on post-secondary education: "Students who move away from home to complete a four-year degree often pay at least $20,000 more than those who continue to live with their parents while studying."[70] The TD Bank report estimates that the annual cost of pursuing an undergraduate degree for students living away from home was $19,588.[71]

[68] Craig Alexander and Shahrzad Mobasher Fard, *The Future Cost of A University Degree*, TD Bank Financial Group, 15 October 2009, p. 3, http://www.td.com/economics/special/ca1009_education.pdf, accessed 25 June 2010.
[69] *Ibid*., p. 2.
[70] *Evidence*, 25 March 2010, Dale Kirby.
[71] Craig Alexander and Shahrzad Mobasher Fard, 15 October 2009, p. 3.

The issue of student debt will be addressed in the chapter on student financial assistance programs.

2.2.3 — Inadequate information and limited knowledge about financial aid

Another significant barrier is related to the assessment of the cost of post-secondary education and its benefits. A poor understanding of the cost of PSE and the benefits of obtaining a post-secondary education can actually lead people to not want to invest in education. Jean-Pierre Voyer, President of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), explained to the committee that certain groups, such as students from low-income families where the parents had no college or university education, are more likely to consider the cost of PSE too high and to underestimate the future salary benefits of a post-secondary degree.[72]

Furthermore, it seems that young Canadians and their families are not aware of the different mechanisms available to fund their education and manage their debt. A study by the Canada Millenium Scholarship Foundation (CMSF) indicates that high school students and their parents have rather limited knowledge of financial aid programs and the cost of post-secondary education. Hence, only 14% of high school students willing to take out loans to fund their education thought that they had adequate knowledge of financial aid programs.[73]

> *People are making rational decisions, but they are based on the wrong information. They think it costs more and they do not understand the benefits economically and otherwise. Providing better information to people about what it actually costs and what the benefits are is critical. We do not do it well currently.*[74]

Therefore, it seems that a major effort is required to improve information about the cost of post-secondary education, its advantages, the means available to finance education and how these programs work.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The committee recommends that the federal government work together with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, to improve the information about post-

[72] *Evidence*, 9 June 2010, Jean-Pierre Voyer.
[73] Canada Millenium Scholarship Foundation, *Closing the Gap: Does Information Matter?*, 2006, pp. 3–5, http://qspace.library.queensu.ca/bitstream/1974/5737/1/Closing_the_Access_Gap.pdf.
[74] *Evidence*, 5 November 2009, Ben Levin.

secondary education provided to Canadians, including primary and secondary school students and their parents, and that the information provided include the following:

a) the costs and benefits of obtaining a post-secondary diploma or degree;

b) information about financial assistance, including eligibility criteria as well as the terms of loan repayment and forgiveness; and

c) an overview of the complete range of educational programs available, including trade schools, apprenticeships, and college and university programs.

2.2.4 — Students from low-income families

The different participation rates for students from rich and poor families are not determined solely by their financial situation. Marc Frenette, an analyst with Statistics Canada, told the committee that students in the top income quartile, based on parental income, have a 50% chance of going to university whereas only 31% of students in the bottom income quartile attend university within two years of graduating high school.[75] However, a more detailed analysis indicates that the gap between the top and bottom income quartiles is also related to other factors, such as primary and secondary school performance and parents' level of education.[76] Therefore, students from low-income families face other barriers in addition to financial constraints. We will examine these barriers in more detail.

A recent Statistics Canada report on parental savings for post-secondary education showed that the proportion of savers among parents rose with both income level and education level.[77]

[75] *Evidence*, 8 October 2009, Marc Frenette.
[76] *Ibid.*
[77] Sylvie Guilmette, "Copeting Priorities – Education and Retirement Saving Behaviours of Canadian Families," Education Matters: Insights on Education, Learning and Training in Canada, Statistics Canada, May 2011. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2011001/article/11432-eng.htm

2.3 — Specific under-represented groups

2.3.1 — Students from rural and remote areas

The distance to a college or university affects the accessibility of post-secondary education. The likelihood that students living more than 80 km from a university will enrol there after completing secondary school is only 11%.[78] This is cause for concern because approximately 20% of Canadians live more than 80 km from a university.[79] However, the vast majority of Canadians live near a college. In fact, only 3% do not have access to a college within an 80-km radius.[80]

Lower participation rates for students from remote or rural areas are explained partly by the higher transportation and housing costs they must incur (see section 2.1.2). However, other non-financial factors are at play. In a study of rural poverty, the Standing Senate committee on Agriculture and Forestry discovered a certain number of difficulties experienced specifically by students from rural areas:

> *Once they finish high school, rural students who want to pursue their education are often compelled to leave their communities for distant urban centres. This transition confronts them with a number of challenges over and above those encountered by most of their urban peers. Among other things, they have to leave behind high school friends and their family, and must adapt to a culture and physical environment often quite different from that of their earlier years. They incur additional costs for food, accommodation and moving expenses because they cannot live in their parents' home. They must also bear the costs of travelling back and forth to their community for major holidays and the summer period. If they choose to stay in the city for better summer job opportunities, they must earn enough to pay for room and board, and try to save some money for the following school year.*[81]

---

[78] *Evidence*, 25 March 2010, Richard E. Mueller.
[79] Marc Frenette, "Too Far to Go On? Distance to School and University Participation," *Education Economics*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 2006, p. 33.
[80] Marc Frenette, "Access to College and University: Does Distance to School Matter?," *Canadian Public Policy*, Vol. 30, No. 4, December 2004, p. 440.
[81] Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, *Beyond Freefall: Halting Rural Poverty*, 39th Parliament, 2nd Session, June 2006, p. 186, http://www.parl.gc.ca/39/2/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/agri-e/rep-e/rep09jun08-e.pdf, accessed 4 July 2010.

Other contextual factors must also be considered. For example, job opportunities are often very limited for the educated in rural areas. Consequently, if they wish to settle in the area they grew up in, youth may not be interested in obtaining a post-secondary degree that will not prove to be an advantage in the job market.[82]

2.3.2 — Francophone students

For Francophone students, both distance and language combine to create barriers to PSE. While there are English-language universities in all Canadian provinces, there are far fewer French-language universities, outside Quebec. The Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne (AUFC) represents 13 Francophone or bilingual universities in six Canadian provinces: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.[83] The situation is similar for colleges. Francophone communities in a minority setting have access to accredited colleges providing French education in only four provinces: New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba and Nova Scotia.[84] This situation was noted by the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages in 2005.[85]

Access to post-secondary education in French for Francophone students outside Quebec is therefore limited by a number of factors. First, "the absence or restricted number of programs offered at the post-secondary level has an impact on the rate of pursuit of studies in French following graduation from high school."[86] It is difficult for French-language institutions to achieve a critical mass. The pool of prospective students is sometimes very small. It is therefore difficult to provide quality programming that is varied.[87] Students from a Francophone minority might have to choose an Anglophone institution offering an education that better meets their needs.

---

[82] *Evidence*, 25 March 2010, Richard E. Mueller.
[83] See: http://www.aufc.ca/.
[84] Réseau des cégeps et collèges francophones du Canada, *Plan d'action 2006-2011*, p. 8, http://www.rccfc.ca/pdf/plan_daction.pdf , accessed 14 July 2010.
[85] Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages, *French-language Education in a Minority Setting: A Continuum from Early Childhood to the Post-secondary Level*, 1st Session, 38th Parliament, June 2005, p. 62, http://www.parl.gc.ca/38/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/offi-e/rep-e/rep06jun05-e.pdf, accessed 14 July 2010.
[86] *Ibid.*
[87] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

In addition to program choice, the distance of institutions offering French programs also plays a role.[88] Many Francophone students must leave their home regions if they wish to continue their education in French. As we have seen, moving to another region to pursue post-secondary studies results in additional expenses. In this context, there is not equal access to education in French in a minority context.

> *Francophone students do not have access equal to that of students who wish to pursue a university education in English because funding sources do not help offset these constraints. Available financial aid in pursuing an education in French is distinctly inadequate, and this is one of our recommendations. One has to consider the situation of Francophones outside Quebec, who live in areas where they cannot study in French and who need scholarships and bursaries.*[89]

The committee recognizes that students who wish to pursue an education in French outside Quebec are at a disadvantage. It was suggested that incentives, including bursaries, be established for these students.[90] The situation of Francophone students outside Quebec is somewhat similar to that of students from rural or remote areas. The committee suggests that the additional expenses of these two groups must be taken into consideration. It will propose concrete solutions in the section on the federal government's financial assistance program.

The SEUR Project

The Université de Montréal has created a program to expose secondary school students to the university and its programs. The SEUR (awareness of university studies and research) project finds ways to increase students' exposure to the university setting in an attempt to interest them in post-secondary education and careers in research.

Its activities are varied and include conferences, day programs and placements. One of its annual initiatives consists of bringing more than 500 secondary students to the campus for one week in order to meet with students and researchers, work in the laboratory and visit companies that hire university graduates from various disciplines. The project has also completed its second year of matching male secondary school students with university students.

For more information, visit the project's website at http://www.seur.qc.ca/.

[88] *Evidence,* 5 May 2010, Kenneth McRoberts.
[89] *Ibid.*
[90] *Ibid.*

2.3.3 — Disabled students

Participation in post-secondary education is lower for disabled persons (see Table 4). Just slightly more than 25% of persons with a disability have not graduated from high school compared to 13.5% for persons without a disability. Although persons with disabilities are more likely than those without disabilities to have trade diplomas and certificates, they are less likely to have college or university degrees.

Table 4 – Educational Attainment for Adults With and Without Disabilities Aged 25 to 64, 2006

	People with Disabilities		People Without Disabilities	
Level of education	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Total	**2 244 010**	**100.0**	**14 830 000**	**100.0**
No certificate	569 610	25.4	2 002 340	13.5
High school diploma	545 720	24.3	3 545 970	23.9
Trades or registered apprenticeship certificate	329 590	14.7	1 785 910	12.0
College, CEGEP, university certificate below bachelor's	488 730	21.8	3 933 010	26.5
Bachelor's degree	187 300	8.3	2 274 630	15.3
Graduate degree	122 480	5.5	1 289 890	8.7

Source: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *2009 Federal Disability Report*: *Advancing the Inclusion of People with Disabilities*, 2009, p. 27.

Disabled persons face many obstacles that can prevent them from accessing post-secondary education. The data available to the committee do not distinguish among types of disabilities. However, it should be noted that 16.1% of youth with disabilities aged 15 to 24 abandoned their education because of their impairment and 29.8% had to reduce their course load, which slowed their progress. Furthermore, 19.7% of disabled youth aged 15 to 24 have experienced long school interruptions because of their disability.[91]

[91] Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *2009 Federal Disability Report*: *Advancing the Inclusion of People with Disabilities*, 2009, p. 31, http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/reports/fdr/2009/fdr_2009.pdf, accessed 12 July 2010.

Additional expenses

Students with disabilities have greater expenses than the general population. Depending on the disability, the affected students may have to pay for equipment and services—such as tutors, oral or sign interpreters, special transportation, note-takers, readers and braillers—so that they can continue their education.

Many disabled students must take a lighter course load.[92] Therefore, the time required to complete a program of study is necessarily longer and, consequently, the debt of these students can rise sharply.

> *A student with a disability who requires course load reduction as a reasonable accommodation for disability-related reasons may need ten years to complete a four-year degree! This student may then incur six additional years of living, tuition and transportation costs associated with attending post-secondary education.*[93]

An increasing number of disabled students are pursuing post-secondary education.[94] However, due to reduced course loads, these students often use up a significant share of their eligible funding before starting their master's or doctoral degrees. They can run short of funds and have to work part-time and thus abandon their studies.[95] Students with disabilities, particularly those with learning difficulties, may have to put extraordinary effort into their studies.[96] Thus, they have less time for part-time employment to supplement their income.[97] After graduating, disabled persons often have greater difficulty finding well-paying jobs in keeping with their skills. Therefore, it may be more difficult for them to repay the debt they accumulated while in school.[98]

---

[92] *Evidence*, 15 April 2010, Claudette Larocque.
[93] Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education, *Brief to the Senate committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology: Study on the Accessibility of Post Secondary Education in Canada*, 15 April 2010, p. 6.
[94] *Evidence*, 15 April 2010, Gordon Dionne.
[95] *Ibid*.
[96] *Evidence*, 15 April 2010, Claudette Larocque.
[97] *Ibid*.
[98] Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education, *Brief*, 15 April 2010, p. 7.

Services for disabled persons

According to the Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-secondary Education (CADSPPE), the number of persons with a disability attending Canadian post-secondary institutions has increased in recent years and the nature of the disabilities has changed. In the past, sensory or mobility disabilities were prevalent. What institutions are now seeing is a significant increase in learning difficulties. It should also be noted that a large number of students present multiple impairments, making the job of those working in this area more complex.[99] Students with disabilities encounter difficulties when they wish to access certain services—sign language interpretation, for example. There may be a shortage of sign language interpreters across Canada. CADSPPE urged the federal government to promote careers in this area. The committee encourages the federal government to study the issue in order to determine the need for interpretation services for deaf or hearing-impaired students and to assess what options are available to remedy the shortage of trained interpreters.

CADSPPE also talked about the difficulties that students with visual impairments have in accessing textbooks. In many cases, students with a visual disability must use adapted documents. The *Copyright Act* can make it difficult to turn printed documents into digital text accessible to a visually impaired person. Some editors, concerned about protecting copyright, may hesitate to provide students with digital text. When digital versions are not available, the students must convert the texts manually, which is a long and complex process. Many post-secondary institutions, especially those in rural areas, do not have the means, time or expertise to help students convert their texts to digital media.[100] The federal government introduced Bill C-32 (An Act to amend the Copyright Act) on 2 June 2010. The committee notes that the current version of the bill proposes amendments to sections dealing with exceptions for individuals with perceptual disabilities. The members find that it would be appropriate to examine the impact of changes to the *Copyright Act* on disabled students and to determine how the *Copyright Act* can be amended to ensure that persons with perceptual disabilities have better access to adapted versions of printed documents. Generally, the members of the committee believe that the government should always examine the impact of new legislation on those who are disabled.

[99] *Evidence*, 15 April 2010, Yolaine Ruel.
[100] Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education, *Brief*, 15 April 2010, p. 8.

Cultural factors

Students with disabilities must also overcome cultural barriers or barriers related to their environment. According to the Quebec Association of Post-secondary Students with Disabilities, disabled students are often very isolated from other students: "They don't often participate in extracurricular activities (study groups, parties, sports groups, et cetera), and obstacles related to transportation and accessibility make their inclusion in the school environment more difficult."[101] Furthermore, disabled students face prejudice continually. According to one witness:

> *Most of the other students make them feel a little bit isolated. Why does this person have more time to take examinations? Why do they have more time to deliver their papers? They do not understand that it is a matter of social justice. They do not see it like that. That is in cultural terms.*[102]

Witnesses indicated they would like the current approach based on individual accommodation to be replaced by "an approach encompassing 'universal design' and inclusive education" where the products, equipment, programs and services would be usable by all people without requiring adaptation.[103] The committee is also of the opinion that a change in attitude is required. It notes the efforts of the federal government, through the Office for Disability Issues, to promote accessibility of campuses and accessibility of education for students with disabilities.[104] The committee finds that even greater efforts must be made to change attitudes. It urges all levels of government to address these issues seriously, particularly accessibility of PSE for disabled students, but also their participation in all aspects of society. The committee will propose changes to financial assistance programs for students with a disability in the section on student assistance.

2.3.4— Older students

Throughout the hearings, witnesses reminded the committee that the traditional route to post-secondary education—obtaining a high school diploma and then going on to college or university—was not the only possibility. A growing number of people are undertaking post-

[101] *Evidence*, 15 April 2010, Yolanda Muñoz.
[102] *Ibid.*
[103] *Ibid.*
[104] *Evidence*, 15 April 2010, Nancy Milroy-Swainson.

secondary studies later in life. Table 5 shows the proportion of Canadians who participated in any type of education or training between July 2007 and July 2008.

Table 5 - Proportion of Canadians aged 18 to 64 who participated in any type of education or training between July 2007 and June 2008 (%)

Age Group	Education or training	Education	Training
18 to 24	72.2	63.3	21.4
25 to 34	50.3	19.4	37.8
35 to 44	47.5	10.7	40.5
45 to 64	35.7	4.8	32.9

Source: Tamara Knighton et al., *Lifelong Learning Among Canadians Aged 18 to 64 Years: First Results from the 2008 Access and Support to Education and Training Survey*, Statistics Canada, November 2009, p. 44.

In general, women and young adults are more likely to go back to school. This is also the case for people working for large corporations who have specialized or management jobs.[105] Interestingly, some studies show that an increasing number of university graduates are enrolling in courses and programs at community colleges and technical institutes, in all likelihood to acquire new, more practical skills.[106] Table 6 shows the main reasons why older students choose post-secondary education.

[105] Tamara Knighton et al., *Lifelong Learning Among Canadians Aged 18 to 64 Years: First Results from the 2008 Access and Support to Education and Training Survey*, Statistics Canada, November 2009, p. 42, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2009079-eng.pdf, accessed 7 December 2010.
[106] Maria Adamuti-Trache and Hans G. Schuetze, *Demand for university continuing education in Canada: Patterns of participation by university graduates*, prepared for the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education, December 2008, pp. 9 and 13, http://cauce-aepuc.ca/documents/Research%20report_Schuetze_Jan%2009.pdf, accessed 12 August 2010.

Table 6 – Reason for Taking a Post-secondary Program by Aged Group (%)

Reason	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	Total
Increase income	48.5	37.5	33.8	43
Keep job	9.5	11.7	14.4	10.9
Promotion	18.2	18.8	20	18.7
Do better job	43.5	52.5	55.7	48.1
Own business	20.9	11.4	6.8	15.8
Find/change jobs	62.1	41.4	42.4	52.6
Other	11.8	13.1	14.9	12.7

Source: Karen Myers and Patrice de Broucker, *Too Many Left Behind: Canada's Adult Education and Training System*, Canadian Policy Research Networks, Research Report W/34, June 2006, p. 39.

Despite their desire to pursue more education, older students face obstacles not encountered by younger students who go directly from high school to university or college. Family responsibilities, work commitments and conflicts with work schedules are the most frequently cited challenges given by older students.[107]

Financial considerations are another barrier. The financial situation of older students is very different from that of younger students who go directly to university or college after completing high school. According to some estimates, living expenses rise from less than $700 per month among 18- to 19-year olds, to almost $2,000 a month among students over 25.[108] Furthermore, a much smaller number of older students can count on the financial support of their parents.[109] Despite these differences, there are no financial aid programs tailored for older students.[110] In fact, most older students are already in the work force and studying part-time while continuing to work. They generally do not receive financial assistance from governments except in exceptional circumstances, such as a period of unemployment.[111] In other situations,

[107] Tamara Knighton et al., 2009, p. 22.
[108] Karen Myers and Patrice de Broucker, June 2006, p. 41.
[109] *Ibid*.
[110] Dale Kirby, Vernon Curranandt and Ann Hollett, "Non-Formal Adult Learning Programs at Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions: Trends, Issues, and Practices," *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2009, p. 79.
[111] *Evidence*, 28 April 2010, Andrew Cochrane.

older learners must use their own savings or count on the support of their employer, which is not always available.

The committee realizes that the support of employers is needed to facilitate continuing education. During this study, it was suggested that incentives such as subsidies or tax credits could be provided to employers who decide to support the continuing education needs of their employees.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The committee recommends that the federal government examine mechanisms to incent small and medium-sized Canadian businesses to encourage and support the continuing education and training of their employees.

Some adults have not developed the knowledge and skills required to pursue post-secondary studies. In particular, those with low literacy skills may not be able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by post-secondary education. Literacy is assessed across four domains: reading text, document use, numeracy and problem solving. Literacy skills are assessed on a scale from 1 to 5, with Level 1 being the lowest proficiency level and Level 5 the highest. Level 3 literacy proficiency is generally considered to be the required level for being able "to cope with the increasing skill demands of today's knowledge-based economy."[112] According to data collected by CMEC and Statistics Canada, approximately 48% of Canadian adults perform at Levels 1 or 2.[113] These individuals are likely to have difficulties in the labour market. They have a great deal to gain from post-secondary education but may not have access to it because of their limited reading skills.

The committee suggests that, with targeted support, it would be possible to ensure that individuals lacking the necessary skills to pursue post-secondary education could still succeed in demanding programs. It is therefore important to ensure that individuals with low literacy skills have access to the support necessary to improve their skills and permit them to access post-secondary education.

---

[112] CMEC, Canada, and Statistics Canada, *Education Indicators in Canada: Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program 2007*, December 2007, pp. 103–105, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-582-x/81-582-x2007001-eng.pdf, accessed 10 August 2010.

[113] *Ibid*., p. 106.

Allison Rougeau of the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) told the committee of the importance of basic skills to all kinds of employment:

> *We cannot put someone in the workplace without basic and essential skills. Employers will expect those. Gone are the days of "if you cannot succeed in school, go work with your hands." The terminology "low skill" is no longer acceptable.*[114]

Through the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, the federal government funds projects to help Canadians acquire the necessary skills to get a job or remain in the job market.[115] However, the committee also finds that funding is required for projects that seek to develop the skills required to access post-secondary education and not just to integrate into the job market.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The committee recommends that the federal government work with municipal, provincial and territorial governments, private sector, voluntary sector, and non-governmental organizations to encourage and strengthen adult and family literacy programs with the goal of helping Canadians develop the skills necessary to access post-secondary education.

2.3.5 — Immigrants

Patrice de Broucker, Chief of Education Indicators and Special Projects at Statistics Canada, told the committee that the Canadian population's high level of education is due in part to immigrants who, when they arrive in Canada, are more likely to have a higher level of education than those born in Canada: "Immigration tends to increase the proportion of people with a university degree."[116] Overall, immigrants are more educated than the Canadian-born due to an immigration policy that gives priority to the selection of educated candidates. According to the 2006 Census, more than half the persons who immigrated to Canada between 2001 and 2006

[114] *Evidence*, 28 April 2010, Allison Rougeau.
[115] See: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES)*, http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/oles/olesindex_en.shtml, accessed 10August 2010.
[116] *Evidence*, 7 October 2009, Patrice de Broucker.

had a university degree. This was more than double the percentage of university degree-holders in the Canadian-born population (20%).[117]

A similar trend can be observed among the children of immigrants. In fact, when taken as a block, the children of immigrants show higher university participation rates than the Canadian-born population. According to Statistics Canada, "non-immigrant Canadians had a 37.7 percent rate of university participation, as compared with university participation rates of 57.0 and 54.3 percent for first and second generation immigrants, respectively." [118] Miles Corak, professor of economics with the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs of the University of Ottawa, told the committee that the children of immigrants to Canada are a relatively advantaged group in our society in terms of education.[119]

Nonetheless, differences have been observed from one ethnocultural group to another in PSE experiences among the children of immigrants.[120] For example, Chinese-speaking immigrant youth tend to do as well or better than Canadian-born youth in terms of secondary school graduation rates, grades and participation in pre-university courses. However, other groups such as Spanish-, Creole- or Vietnamese-speaking immigrant students generally perform below their Canadian-born counterparts.[121] These differences seem to stem from various factors. For example, according to researchers Ross Finnie and Richard E. Mueller, one explanation might be that the children of Chinese immigrants place a very high value on education.[122]

Another factor relates to the language skills of young immigrants. A poor grasp of either official language constitutes a barrier to PSE. The ability to speak, read and write in English or French is essential to completing high school and accessing post-secondary studies in Canada. According to data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), at age 15, the reading scores of young immigrants are significantly lower than for their Canadian-born

---

[117] Statistics Canada, *Educational Portrait of Canada, 2006 Census,* March 2008, p. 6, http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-560/pdf/97-560-XIE2006001.pdf, accessed 28 July 2010.
[118] Ross Finnie and Richard E. Mueller, *Access to Post-Secondary Education in Canada Among the Children of Canadian Immigrants*, MESA Project Research Paper 2009-1, 2009, p. 9. http://www.mesa-project.org/pub/pdf/MESA2008_Finnie_Mueller.pdf Accessed 17 February 2011.
[119] *Evidence,* 21 April 2010, Miles Corak.
[120] *Ibid.*
[121] Canadian Council on Learning, "Effective literacy strategy for immigrant students", *Lessons in Learning*, 23 September 2009, p. 3, http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/LessonsInLearning/09_23_09EN.pdf, accessed 4 January 2011,
[122] Ross Finnie and Richard E. Mueller, 2009, p. 20.

counterparts.[123] A focus on basic literacy skills and second language learning thus seems to be necessary to ensure that all immigrant youth can benefit from PSE.[124]

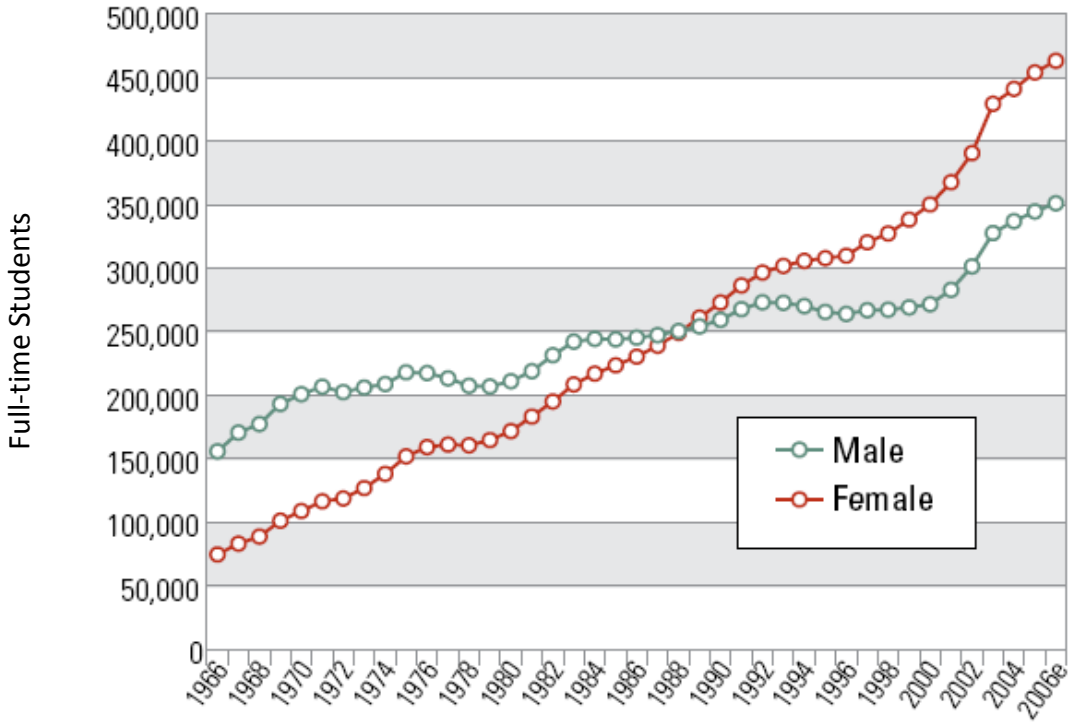
It is thus important to avoid placing all immigrant youth in the same category when discussing access to post-secondary education. In fact, many factors interact in complex ways to impact on access to post-secondary studies for immigrants. When addressing the issue of PSE participation among the children of immigrants, the committee urges governments to use caution to ensure that the specific circumstances of each ethnocultural group is taken into consideration.

2.4 — Gender differences

The members of the committee are particularly concerned by the growing gap between post-secondary participation rates for men and women, especially at the university level. Over the past 40 years, the percentage of male and female students on campus has changed remarkably. As Marc Frenette of Statistics Canada told the committee, "Back in 1971, 68% of university students were male; in 2001, 58% were female."[125] Figure 4 shows that while the number of men registered at universities has increased, the number of women has grown much more quickly. Hence, the gap between women and men has been increasing.

[123] Canadian Council on Learning, "Effective literacy strategy for immigrant students", *Lessons in Learning*, 23 September 2009, p. 2.
[124] *Ibid.*
[125] *Evidence*, 8 October 2010, Marc Frenette.

Figure 4 – University Enrolment According to Gender



Source: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), *Trends in Higher Education, Volume 1: Enrolment*, 2007, p. 12.

The gender gap has been particularly pronounced in medical schools; for example McMaster University changed its admission criteria when more 75% of the entry class in 2007 was female.[126] Dr. Paul Cappon of the Canadian Council on Learning said similar changes have been made in a number of medical and law schools, going back to 2002.[127] Data up to 2010-2011 from the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada show that the enrolment of women peaked in 2004 at 59.1%, and was most recently at 57.7%.[128]

There appears to be a number of reasons for the more general gender gap in PSE enrolment, some going back to earlier stages of life. As early as age 5, boys and girls display differences in their readiness to learn at school. According to a 2006 study, at age 5, girls scored

[126] Carolyn Abraham and Kate Hammer, "Failing Boys: Part 5: Is affirmative action for men the answer to enrolment woes?," The Globe and Mail, 25 October 2010. http://m.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/failing-boys/is-affirmative-action-for-men-the-answer-to-enrolment-woes/article1766432/?service=mobile accessed 9 August 2011.
[127] *Ibid.*
[128] Association of Faculties of Medicine in Canada, "Enrolment in Canadian Faculties of Medicine by Sex 1968/69 -2010/11" *Canadian Medical Education Statistics 2010*, p. 11. http://www.afmc.ca/pdf/Cmes-2010_ShrinkMay2011.pdf accessed 9 August 2011.

higher in communication skills, copying and symbol use, attention and self-control of behaviour. Boys, on the other hand, scored higher in curiosity.[129] Another study found that these measures of preparedness for school at age 5 could be linked to academic and learning performance at age 9.[130]

Ontario studies have shown that a larger percentage of females than males meet or exceed provincial standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the primary and junior levels.[131] At high school level, performance in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test is consistently higher for females.[132] The same situation exists elsewhere in Canada. Results from PISA indicate that the gender gap in reading has remained constant between 2000 and 2009 in all provinces but New Brunswick in which it was significantly reduced.[133] Many witnesses stressed the importance of good reading skills to access post-secondary education and more particularly university education. In general, it appears that female students have better marks and better study habits in high school than boys. [134] The higher academic performance by girls and young women in primary and secondary school may advantage them in the admission process to post-secondary institutions, possibly contributing to the gender gap in university participation rates.

Students' aspirations for post-secondary education also vary according to gender. At 15, females already have higher aspirations regarding post-secondary education.[135] In addition, external factors may influence aspirations for post-secondary education among male students, including the rate of monetary return on education. Without a high school diploma, young men can find jobs more readily than women. Furthermore, young men can earn a relatively high

---

[129] Eleanor M. Thomas, *Readiness to Learn at School Among Five-year old Children in Canada*, Statistics Canada, 2006, p. 126, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-599-m/89-599-m2006004-eng.pdf, accessed 10 December 2010.
[130] Eleanor M. Thomas, *Canadian Nine-year-olds at School*, Statistics Canada, 2009, p. 43, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-599-m/89-599-m2009006-eng.pdf, accessed 10 December 2010.
[131] Angelika Kerr, *What About the Boys? An Overview of Gender Trends in Education and the Labour Market in Ontario*, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2010, p. 12, http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/FINAL%20Gender%20ENG.pdf, accessed 10 December 2010.
[132] *Ibid*.
[133] Tamara Knighton, Pierre Brochu and Tomasz Gluszynski, *Measuring Up : Canadian Results of the OECD PISA Study*, Statistics Canada, 2010, p. 26, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-590-x/81-590-x2010001-eng.pdf, accessed 10 December 2010.
[134] Marc Frenette and Klarka Zeman, "Understanding the Gender Gap in University Attendance: Evidence Based on Academic Performance, Study Habits, and Parental Influences," in Ross Finnie et al., *Who Goes? Who Stays? What Matters? Accessing and Persisting in Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008, p. 148.
[135] Louis N. Christofides, Michael Hoy and Zhi Li, *Evolution of Aspirations for University Attendance: A Gender Comparison*, Measuring the Effectivness of Student Aid Project, p. 15.

salary without a post-secondary accreditation, as described to the committee by Richard Mueller, a Statistics Canada analyst:

> *Many times, the opportunities for young men with only a high school education are better than those for young women. I am from Alberta, and we have lots of young men going up to the oil patch with maybe not even a high school education, and the rate of return they receive for that high school education is quite handsome. This could tilt the balance in favour of not attending post-secondary education.*[136]
>
> This situation can influence their motivation and, consequently, their marks.

In general, the committee suggests that concentrating on the factors such as the high school drop-out rate, experiences in elementary and high school, and family environment may increase the university participation rate of male students and start closing the gender gap. In particular, the committee suggests it is absolutely necessary to intervene earlier in the educational career of boys to affect an increase in the male university participation rate.

The committee did not undertake an in-depth study of the K-12 system, recognizing provincial jurisdiction over that system and does not wish to recommend specific actions to provincial and territorial governments,

However, the committee has also noted the increased proportion women among K-12 teachers: Canadian Teachers' Federation data for 2008 show that more than 70% of teachers in Canada are women.[137] A 2004 publication by the Ontario College of Teachers notes that this increase is a continuing but accelerating trend:

> *In Ontario, across Canada, and in many nations, there is a shortage of men in the teaching profession, particularly at the elementary level. This gender imbalance is not new: it was noted by educators decades ago and confirmed in subsequent years by Ontario College of Teachers' data that anticipated a "retirement bulge" of male teachers in the next few years and revealed persistent low numbers of males applying to the province's faculties of education.*

[136] *Evidence*, 25 March 2010, Richard E. Mueller.
[137] Canadian Teachers' Federation, "Status of Women: Selected key issues affecting education." http://www.ctf-fce.ca/Priorities/Default.aspx?id=625875 accessed 9 August 2011.

> *The disparity between the proportions of male and female teachers has accelerated, to the point that it has become a professional and public concern.*[138]

This report made a series of recommendations to provincial government and post-secondary institutions to increase the participation of men in the teaching profession.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The committee recommends that all partners in education examine carefully the current education system to identify how it is failing boys and how to ensure that they are in the best position to access PSE.

[138] Ontario College of Teachers, *Narrowing the Gender Gap: Attracting Men to Teaching.* 2004, p. 2. http://www.oct.ca/publications/pdf/men_in_teaching_e.pdf accessed 9 August 2011.

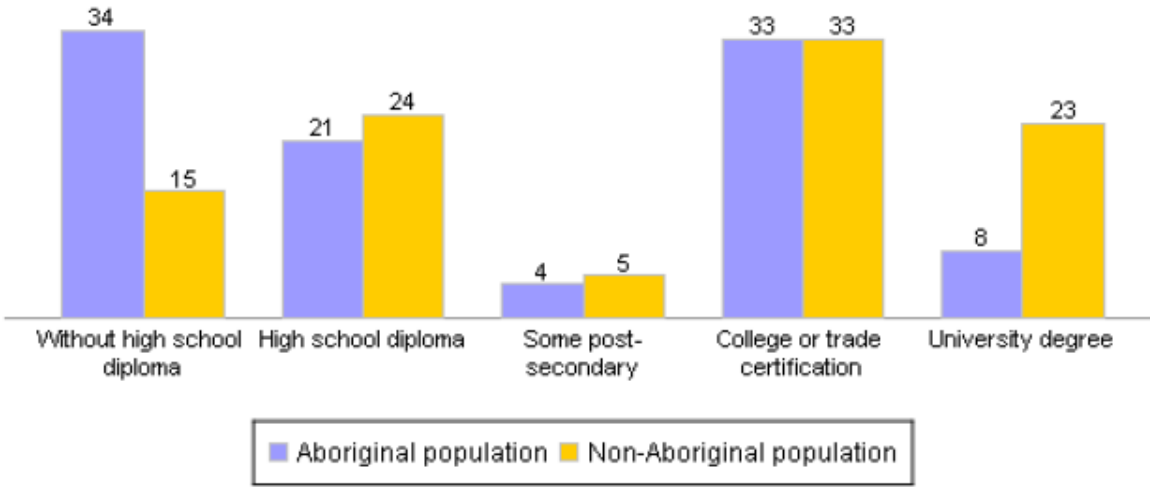
3 — Aboriginal People and Post-secondary Education

The committee held three meetings with the specific purpose of discussing the barriers that Aboriginal people face when accessing post-secondary education. The committee members feel that this is a critical issue given the low Aboriginal participation rates and the federal government's role in this area.

3.1 — Overview

In general, the percentage of Aboriginal people with a PSE diploma is lower than in the non-Aboriginal population.

Figure 5 – Level of Education, Non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Populations, Aged 25-64, 2006 (%)



Source: HRSDC, "Learning – Education Attainment," Indicators of Well-Being in Canada, http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/.3ndic.1t.4r@-eng.jsp?iid=29

As shown in the figure above, according to the 2006 Census, only 41% of Aboriginal persons aged 25 to 64 had a PSE diploma, compared with 56% of the overall Canadian population in the same age group.[139] Recent research suggests that "Aboriginal students are

[139] Statistics Canada, *Educational Portrait of Canada, 2006 Census*, 2008, pp. 9 and 19, http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-560/pdf/97-560-XIE2006001.pdf, accessed 5 July 2010.

substantially more likely than non-Aboriginal students to leave PSE in first or second year."[140] In 2006, 8% of Aboriginal people had a university degree, compared with 23% of non-Aboriginal people.[141] Completion of college or trade certification was comparable between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Table 7 shows education levels for First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

Table 7 – Proportion of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Aged 25 to 64, by Educational Attainment

Group	Trade-school certificate	College diploma	University degree
First Nations	13%	17%	6%
Inuit	13%	17%	4%
Métis	16%	21%	9%
Overall Canadian population	12%	20%	23%

Source: Statistics Canada, *Educational Portrait of Canada*, 2006 Census, pp. 19-23.

3.2 — Importance of post-secondary education for Aboriginal people

We have seen earlier in this report that post-secondary education has a positive effect on Canadians' socio-economic status. In general, an individual's employability and salary increase in relation to their education level. Post-secondary education could improve the situation of Aboriginal people, who have higher poverty and unemployment rates than the overall Canadian population. Andrew Sharpe of the Canadian Centre for Living Standards, told the committee:

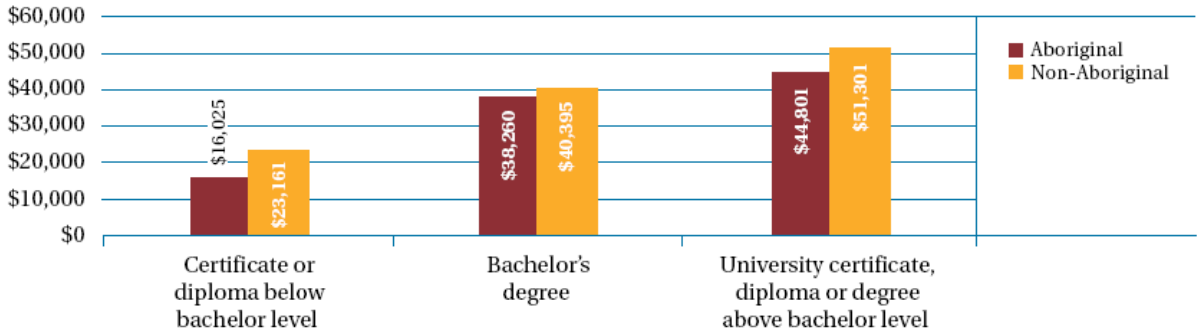
> *The employment rate for Aboriginal Canadians is basically almost 10 percentage points below that of non-Aboriginal Canadians. The participation rate is 4 per cent below. The unemployment rate of Aboriginal Canadians in 2006 was 15 per cent and for non-*

[140] Ross Finnie, et. al., *Aboriginals in Post-Secondary Education* (Version 11-18-10), A MESA Project L-SLIS Research Brief, Canadian Education Project, 2010. http://www.mesa-project.org/pub/pdf/MESA%20Brief%2010%20Aboriginals%20%2811-18-10%29.pdf accessed 25 July 2011.
[141] *Ibid*., p. 19.

Aboriginal Canadians it was 6 per cent. Those gaps are largely attributed to the differences in educational attainment.[142]

Increased PSE participation by Aboriginal people could have a significant positive impact on their earnings. Aboriginal persons with a PSE diploma have employment rates closer to those of the non-Aboriginal population.[143] In addition, Figure 5 demonstrates that the average salaries earned by Aboriginal persons with a university degree, compared to Aboriginal people who have not gone to university, are closer to those of the general population.

Figure 6 – Median Income Among Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Individuals in 2005, by Level of Education



Source: Berger, Motte and Parkin, 2009, p. 16.

Improving access to post-secondary education for Aboriginal people can also benefit Canadian society as a whole. They represent the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population. In the 2006 Census, 1,172,790 Canadians self-identified as Aboriginal. From 1996 to 2006, the Aboriginal population grew by 45%—six times faster than the non-Aboriginal population.[144] Given the important role Aboriginal people will play in Canada's workforce, it is imperative that the education gap between all Canadians and the Aboriginal population be closed. Roberta Jamieson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Aboriginal

---

[142] *Evidence*, 31 March 2010, Andrew Sharpe.
[143] John Richards, *Closing the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal Education Gaps*, C.D. Howe Institute Backgrounder, October 2008, p. 2, http://www.cdhowe.org/pdf/Backgrounder_116.pdf.
[144] Statistics Canada, *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations*, 2006 Census, January 2008, p. 10, http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-558/pdf/97-558-XIE2006001.pdf, accessed 28 July 2010. Note, however, that part of this increase is due to an increased number of people self-identifying as Aboriginal, particularly Métis. For more information, see Michael Mendelson's testimony from 31 March 2010.

Achievement Foundation, told the committee that $115 billion could be saved over the next 15 years by working to close the participation gap between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals.[145]

3.3 — Barriers to post-secondary education for Aboriginal students

Aboriginal persons wishing to pursue post-secondary education face many barriers. Aboriginal students are often the first in their families to access post-secondary education. In addition, their socio-economic situation is often worse than that of other Canadians. A significant number of Aboriginal people live in geographically isolated areas. Most of the barriers identified in this report are particularly pertinent to Aboriginal populations. However, they also face additional challenges that are very different from those facing non-Aboriginal students.

3.3.1 — Barriers to K-12 preparation

In order to pursue post-secondary education and succeed, Aboriginal students must complete high school and obtain the necessary knowledge and skills. However, Aboriginal drop-out rates are very high: more than 40% of Aboriginal persons aged 20 to 24 did not have a high school diploma in 2006, compared to less than 15% of non-Aboriginal people in the same age group.[146] Among First Nations aged 20 to 24 who lived on-reserve in 2006, close to 60% have not finished high school.[147] According to Michael Mendelson, Senior Scholar at the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, this is an extremely significant barrier because Aboriginal persons who earn a high school diploma go on to post-secondary education in a proportion comparable to the non-Aboriginal population. Completion of high school is therefore a key element to consider.[148]

The elementary and high school system, particularly in schools on First Nation reserves, must allow Aboriginal students to acquire the skills needed to pursue post-secondary education. But that is not always the case.

---

[145] *Evidence*, 10 December 2009, Roberta Jamieson.
[146] Richards, October 2008, p. 4.
[147] Michael Mendelson, *Improving Education on Reserves: A First Nations Education Authority Act*, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, July 2008, p. 1, http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/684ENG.pdf, accessed 6 July 2010.
[148] *Evidence*, 31 March 2010, Michael Mendelson. See also Michael Mendelson, *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, July 2006, p. 31.

Jane Preston, a doctoral student researching on-reserve education, and Michael Mendelson both underscored the insufficient funding of on-reserve schools and pointed out that it is not equal to the provincial funding levels for public schools off-reserve.[149] It should be noted that on-reserve schools fall under federal jurisdiction. In 2004, the Auditor General of Canada highlighted this issue:

> *[…] the funding formula for band-operated schools has not been modified since its inception in the 1980s. First Nations have argued for years that funding levels are insufficient, notably to pay teachers at a salary level comparable with that of their provincial counterparts.*[150]

The committee considers the ability to recruit and retain qualified teachers of utmost importance for on-reserve schools so that they can offer adequate schooling and support to Aboriginal students. While the committee's study did not focus specifically on elementary and secondary education, the members believe that they have learned enough about the importance of education-related barriers to recommend significant investment in on-reserve schools.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The committee recommends that the Government of Canada work with First Nations to improve educational outcomes for students on reserve, by building on actions that have proven successful such as concluding tripartite agreements, to ensure that supports for First Nations students, including on reserve school funding, focuses on the shared goal of improved educational outcomes.

3.3.2 — Cultural and pedagogical barriers

The committee has learned that the teaching methods and learning styles in Canadian post-secondary institutions often differ from the traditions of Aboriginal groups.

> *The educational paradigm reflected in post-secondary programs predominantly epitomizes learning as an individualized, competitive, testable process. In contrast, Aboriginal pedagogy prioritizes learning acquired through cooperation, storytelling, group discussions, modelling and observations. In many post-secondary*

[149] *Evidence*, 31 March 2010, Jane Preston; *Evidence*, 31 March 2010, Michael Mendelson.
[150] Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons*, Chapter 5, p. 15 http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/docs/20041105ce.pdf, accessed 6 July 2010.

> *institutions, the programs, curricula and presentation of content are misaligned with Aboriginal culture and pedagogy.*[151]

In addition, the language used in universities and colleges is often a second language for Aboriginal students.[152] These pedagogical or cultural barriers can discourage some Aboriginal students from enrolling in a post-secondary program or diminish their chances of earning a post-secondary diploma. In fact, Noella Steinhauer, Director of Education for the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, told the committee that the post-secondary drop-out rate among Aboriginal students could be as high as 50%.[153]

Aboriginal institutions

Post-secondary institutions run by Aboriginal peoples are an interesting solution to encourage perseverance and completion of post-secondary studies. Marc Leclair of the Métis National Council and Lisa Wilson of the Gabriel Dumont Institute affirmed that these institutions help to improve Aboriginal access to post-secondary education.[154] Thomas Chase, of Royal Roads University had only praise for the First Nations University of Canada:

> *It provides a safe place for people who are coming in from tiny, Northern Aboriginal communities that may have only 100, 200 or 300 people. In many cases, this is those students' first contact with Southern, urban civilization, such as it is, and it is an overwhelming experience. To be in an institution that is built around their culture, in which they see similar faces—the artwork, even the cuisine in the cafeteria reflects their own ways of life—is an important way to ensure that they complete their post-secondary education.*[155]

Evidence cited by the National Aboriginal Achievement Fund also suggests that these institutions have a higher graduation rate.[156]

Throughout Canada, there are approximately 10,000 Aboriginal students enrolled in about 45 Aboriginal post-secondary institutions.[157] In most cases, these institutions must sign an

[151] *Evidence*, 31 March 2010, Jane Preston.
[152] *Ibid*.
[153] *Evidence*, 10 December 2009, Noella Steinhauer.
[154] *Evidence*, 14 April 2010, Marc Leclair; *Evidence*, 14 April 2010, Lisa Wilson.
[155] *Evidence*, 10 June 2010, Thomas Chase.
[156] *Evidence*, 10 December 2009, Roberta Jamieson.

agreement with a post-secondary institution that is recognized by a provincial government in order to award diplomas or degrees.

The federal government provides financial support to a large number of these institutions through the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP). This program, managed by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), supports post-secondary institutions in the design and implementation of programs specifically aimed at registered Indians.[158] The program has a budget of approximately $22 million to "design and deliver college and university level courses for First Nation and Inuit students, including research and development of First Nation and Inuit education."[159]

The funds are allocated following a call for proposals, which means that the institutions must periodically re-apply in order to receive federal government funding. ISSP funding can be used only for selected projects and not for the day-to-day operations of Aboriginal institutions. Generally speaking, Aboriginal institutions do not have access to the provincial funding that is available to other colleges and universities for operational costs.[160] As a result, they have to find alternative funding sources in order to develop and implement new programs that respond to the needs of Aboriginal students.

In a recent discussion paper, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) called for a review of funding of Aboriginal post-secondary educational institutions to enable these institutions to truly fulfill their role with respect to Aboriginal students.[161] According to the AFN, Aboriginal institutions need stable, predictable funding to cover operational costs as well as capital grants

---

[157] Canadian Council on Learning, *The State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada: A Holistic Approach to Measuring Success*, December 2009, p. 50, http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/StateAboriginalLearning/SAL-FINALReport_EN.PDF, accessed 29 July 2010.

[158] Registered Indians, also known as status Indians, meet requirements set out in the *Indian Act*, and are eligible for services that may be provided only to this subset of First Nations people. For more information on the definitions, please see Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, "Terminology." http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014642 accessed 8 December 2011.

[159] Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, *Indian Studies Support Program*, http://www.aadnc-andc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033691 accessed 8 December 2011.

[160] Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, *Submission to Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology*, 16 June 2010.

[161] Assembly of First Nations, *Taking Action for First Nations Post-Secondary Education: Access, Opportunity, and Outcomes Discussion Paper*, 21 June 2010, p. 23, http://www.afn.ca/cmslib/general/mfnps.pdf, accessed 7 July 2010.

(to build libraries, for example), grants for program evaluation and development, and increased funding for student support services.[162]

The committee members note that the $22 million allocated to the ISSP seems quite modest, especially given the education gap between Aboriginal people and the rest of the Canadian population. In its submission to the committee, the Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium explained that of the approximately $10 billion the federal government has set aside for post-secondary education and research, $330 million is allocated to post-secondary education programs for Aboriginal people. Of that $330 million, $22 million is earmarked for Aboriginal academic institutions, including public colleges and universities.[163] It is important to note that non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions can also receive ISSP funding to develop programs for Aboriginal students, which further reduces funding for Aboriginal institutions.

The committee notes that the method for allocating these funds, i.e. a call for proposals, does not seem appropriate and does not allow for strategic or long-term planning. These issues were raised in 2007 by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.[164] The government has not acted on the committee's recommendations regarding the genuine need to fund Aboriginal institutions, the method of allocating funds and operational funding.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The committee recommends that the federal government evaluate its aid to Aboriginal post-secondary programs and institutions, including skills training, and consult with organizations that represent Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions in order to determine whether or not the allocation to ISSP is adequate to develop a funding method for the Program that is based on the genuine financial needs of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions.

---

[162] *Ibid.*
[163] Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium, *Submission*, 16 June 2010.
[164] House of Commons, Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, *No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, 39th Parliament, 1st Session, February 2007, http://www2.parl.gc.ca/content/hoc/committee/391/AANO/Reports/RP2683969/aanorp02/aanorp02-e.pdf, accessed 8 July 2010.

3.3.3. Financial barriers for students

Aboriginal students seem to face additional difficulties as well, including socio-economic obstacles. The poverty and unemployment rates among Aboriginal populations are generally higher than those of the overall Canadian population.[165] In addition, young Aboriginal students are more likely to have dependent children than non-Aboriginal Canadians of the same age.[166] Aboriginal students must often move away from their community or region to pursue university or college studies. Once they arrive in an urban centre, they face problems like a lack of suitable housing, difficulty finding or affording quality childcare, and an increased cost of living.[167] All of these factors contribute to the education gap between Aboriginal people and other Canadians.

Post-Secondary Student Support Program

Like others, Aboriginal students must overcome certain financial obstacles to access PSE, and need adequate financial support. The Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP), administered jointly by AANDC, band councils and Inuit organizations, offers grants for Inuit students and First Nations students registered under the *Indian Act*. The grants cover registration fees, tuition and the cost of books and course supplies. A travel fund is also available to students who have to leave their place of permanent residence to study. The PSSSP can also include a living allowance to help cover the cost of food, housing, transportation and childcare, if needed.

Many witnesses expressed their concern about the level of funding for federal programs to improve Aboriginal access to post-secondary education. During his testimony, Jaden Keitlah, Chairperson of the National Aboriginal Caucus of the Canadian Federation of Students, explained that "increases in funding for the PSSSP have been capped at 2 per cent per year since 1996."[168] This cap applies to all post-secondary education programs administered by AANDC. Thus, the funds allocated to the PSSSP have not really increased since 1996 if inflation and the increase in the Aboriginal population are taken into account.[169] In 2008–2009, the PSSSP distributed approximately $292 million to 22,000 students (averaging more than $13,000 per

[165] *Evidence*, 31 March 2010, Andrew Sharpe.
[166] *Evidence*, 10 December 2009, Noella Steinhauer.
[167] *Evidence*, 31 March 2010, Jane Preston.
[168] *Evidence*, 10 December 2009, Jaden Keitlah.
[169] Canadian Federation of Students, *Aboriginal Education*, http://www.cfs-fcee.ca/aboriginal/english/index.php, accessed 12 January 2011..

student).[170] Officials from AANDC told the committee that 10 years ago, almost 30,000 Aboriginal students benefitted from this program.[171] The Canadian Federation of Students estimates that over the past 10 years, approximately 13,000 Aboriginal students wishing to attend a post-secondary institution could have been denied funding due to a lack of resources allocated to the program.[172]

RECOMMENDATION 9

The committee recommends that the 2% cap on funding increases for post secondary education programs administered by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada in effect since 1996-be reviewed immediately such that the funds allocated to the Post Secondary Student Support Program reflect the real needs of Aboriginal Students and are administered through an open, transparent and fully accountable distribution mechanism.

Reviewing the Program

In the 2008 federal budget, Kathleen Keenan of AANDC told the committee, the government committed to reviewing the PSSSP "in order to ensure that it is both coordinated with other programs and, in particular, that it provides the support that First Nation and Inuit students need to stay in school and complete their education."[173] The program has been evaluated numerous times and the ensuing departmental audit published in 2009 included 14 recommendations covering funding, management and program accountability. This audit did not determine if the program was meeting its objectives.[174]

In the Speech from the Throne delivered March 3, 2010, the federal government committed to partnering with Aboriginal communities and provincial governments to improve education for Aboriginal people. This commitment was reiterated in the 2010 federal budget, where it was stated that the government would implement a "new approach to providing support to First Nations and Inuit post-secondary students to ensure that students receive the support they

[170] *Evidence*, 10 December 2009, Kathleen Keenan..
[171] Canadian Federation of Students, *Aboriginal Education*
[172] Canadian Federation of Students, *Aboriginal Education: Aboriginal Students.* . http://www.cfs-fcee.ca/aboriginal/english/campaigns.php accessed 12 January 2011
[173] *Evidence*, 10 December 2009, Kathleen Keenan.
[174] *Ibid*.

need to attend post-secondary education. The new approach will be effective and accountable, and will be coordinated with other federal student support programs."[175] The details of this new approach have not yet been released. However, some studies commissioned by the federal government imply that major changes may be made to how the program is run.[176]

In the 2011 federal budget, further commitments were made to reviewing the K-12 program, with information on the involvement of First Nations: According to AANDC's website,

> *Budget 2011 reiterated the Government's commitment to work in collaboration with the Assembly of First Nations towards elementary and secondary education reform. To that end, a National Panel has been appointed to lead an engagement process with First Nation leaders, parents, students, elders, teachers, provinces and all those with an interest in providing input on how to enhance the education system and outcomes of First Nation students. The National Panel will submit two reports; a progress report mid-way through the engagement process and a final report with recommendations by the end of the 2011 calendar year. These reports are to be presented to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and to the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations.* [177]

The committee heard from Dave Snow, a researcher who appeared before the committee as an individual and had co-written a proposed new funding model published by the Macdonald Laurier Institute for Public Policy, that going into debt and taking on a financial burden are among the primary reasons some Aboriginal students choose not to pursue post-secondary education.[178] This suggests that increased student loans might not be the most effective mechanism.

---

[175] Department of Finance, *Budget 2010: Leading the Way on Jobs and Growth*, Ottawa, 4 March 2010, p. 73, http://www.budget.gc.ca/2010/pdf/budget-planbudgetaire-eng.pdf, accessed 29 July 2010. See also: Government of Canada, *Speech From the Throne*, 3 March 2010, http://www.discours.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1388, accessed 18 August 2010.

[177] Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada "Reforming First Nations Education modified 30 June 2011 http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1314210313525 . Accessed 8 December 2011

[178] Evidence, 31 March 2010, Dave Snow

Involving Aboriginal communities

Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), expressed concern that the AFN had not been invited to participate in this review, especially since the government committed to partnering with Aboriginal communities in the Speech from the Throne:

> *We began with the notion that INAC is doing a review. How is it that we will be involved in reforming or strengthening it if there is internal work going on with which we are not intimate?* [179]

During the committee hearings, proposals were made regarding improvements to the system, including a proposal for fundamental reform that would provide funding directly to students instead of through Aboriginal organizations.[180]

The committee notes that the PSSSP, in its current format, does not seem to be meeting the needs of Aboriginal students. Program funding is insufficient and there are doubts as to whether the program is able to deliver its intended results. Changes are needed and the primary stakeholders, e.g., the AFN, have shown an interest in participating in a nation-wide discussion.[181] However, the committee suggests that solutions should not be imposed on Aboriginal communities, in keeping with testimony provided by Michael Mendelson of the Caledon Institute:

> *I think that the history of the last hundred and something years should tell us that imposing and coercion are just not the right way to go. There are extreme circumstances where it may be necessary to intervene, but they have to be visibly extreme circumstances, and I do not think that we are in that situation with respect to the current post-secondary support program.*[182]

As Chief Atleo, told the committee, "First Nations need to be fully involved in designing that response."[183]

---

[179] *Evidence*, 14 April 2010, Shawn A-in-chut Atleo.
[180] *Evidence*, 31 March 2010, Dave Snow.
[181] *Evidence*, 14 April 2010, Shawn A-in-chut Atleo.
[182] *Evidence*, 31 March 2010, Michael Mendelson.
[183] *Evidence*, 14 April 2010, Shawn A-in-chut Atleo.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The committee recommends that the federal government invite national Aboriginal organizations, Aboriginal student groups, and Aboriginal students to formally participate in an evaluation of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program through an advisory committee.

Eligibility for assistance

Betty Ann Lavallée, National Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal People, told the committee:

> *The federal and provincial governments have a shared responsibility to equally ensure for Aboriginal peoples […] that adequate funding or post-secondary funding mechanisms are available to all the Aboriginal peoples who are deserving and aspire to improve their social and economic standing within the federation of Canada through higher education or lifelong learning.*[184]

Métis or First Nations do not have access to PSSSP funding unless they are registered under the *Indian Act*. Roger Hunka, also of the Congress of Aboriginal People, told the committee that registered Indians who do not live on-reserve often have difficulties obtaining funding through the program.[185] The committee suggests that all Aboriginal groups face obstacles when accessing post-secondary education and that it is important to help them.

Of course, there are other options available to Métis and non-status Indians. They can apply to the Canada Student Loans Program and to provincial loans and scholarship programs. Métis and non-status Indians also have access to certain grants or scholarships offered by non-governmental organizations. The committee heard testimony from representatives of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF), which has long been recognized as a source of support for post-secondary Aboriginal students (see Box 5). Since its inception, the Foundation has distributed more than $37 million in bursaries to nearly 10,000 students. However, the Foundation is able to support only 27% of applicants.[186]

---

[184] *Evidence*, 14 April 2010, Betty Ann Lavallée.
[185] *Evidence*, 14 April 2010, Roger Hunka.
[186] National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, *Overview*, http://www.naaf.ca/about_naaf, accessed 8 July 2010.

During our hearings, the National Aboriginal Caucus of the Canadian Federation of Students[187] and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples[188] recommended that the federal government modify its programs in order to offer financial aid to Métis and non-status Indians. In the past, the Métis National Council proposed that the federal government fund an endowment to support the scholarship and bursary trusts established by Métis.[189]

The committee members suggest that a solution must be found to provide Métis and non-status Indian students with adequate funding.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The committee recommends that the federal government consider ways to ensure Métis and non-status First Nations have access to post-secondary training, and include consideration of the creation of a national scholarship and bursary fund for Métis and for non-status First Nations.

The committee encourages the government to work with the NAAF, which has been active in this field for 25 years, to establish this fund.

[187] *Evidence*, 10 December 2009, Jaden Keitlah.
[188] *Evidence*, 14 April 2010, Betty Ann Lavallée.
[189] Métis National Council, *Métis Education Report,* A Special Report on Métis Education Prepared by the Métis National Council for the Summit on Aboriginal Education, 25 February 2009, p. 15, http://www.metisnation.ca/pdf-0715208/Ka%20tipaymishoyak%20Metis%20Education%20Report%20Feb%2020%202009.pdf, accessed 8 July 2010.

4 — Post-secondary Funding Mechanisms

While post-secondary education is not exclusively under federal jurisdiction, the federal government does play a critical role in funding post-secondary studies through direct transfers to the provinces, research support and student assistance programs. This chapter of the report focuses on federal student assistance programs designed to increase the accessibility of PSE. Other federal support mechanisms are discussed in a subsequent chapter.

4.1 — Student financial assistance

The committee's recommendations with respect to student financial assistance programs are listed at the end of this section.

4.1.1 — Canada Student Loans Program

The Canada Student Loans Program (CSLP)[190] was launched in 1964 and since then, close to 4.3 million students have received almost $32 billion in student loans. In 2007–2008, the CSLP disbursed more than $2 billion in loans to 354,144 students. Under the current program, the Government of Canada funds student loans directly, and a service provider handles administration and loan repayment. Students can receive a loan covering 60% of their estimated requirements up to a maximum of $210 per week of study. The total loan for an eight-month period of study can be up to $7,140. The provincial and territorial governments contribute the other 40% to students in their jurisdiction. This arrangement is in effect throughout Canada, except in Quebec, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. These jurisdictions operate their own student loans programs and receive annual federal transfer payments.[191] Four provinces—Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Ontario and Saskatchewan—have simplified the student loan application process by coordinating their programs with the CSLP and introducing the principle of "one student, one loan."

---

[190] Information on the CSLP is taken from the *Canada Student Loans Program Annual Report 2007–2008*, produced by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, http://142.236.154.113/eng/learning/canada_student_loan/Publications/annual_report/2007-2008/index.shtml, accessed 19 July 2010.

[191] Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *Important Notice for Residents of Quebec, Nunavut, or the Northwest Territories*, http://www.rhdcc.gc.ca/fra/apprentissage/subventions_etudes/notabene.shtml, accessed 19 July 2010.

Full-time students do not have to start repaying their loans while still in school, and the government pays the interest during that time. Part-time students do not have to repay their loans while they are studying. However, interest accumulates during this time, although they are not required to pay it while in school. Full-time and part-time students must both begin to repay their loans within six months after completing their studies.

In total, a full-time student can receive financial assistance for a maximum of 340 weeks. Students enrolled in a PhD program can receive an additional 60 weeks of assistance. Students with a permanent disability are eligible for assistance for 520 weeks. Furthermore, part-time students can borrow a cumulative total of $10,000 (principal and interest) under the CSLP.

4.1.2 — Repayment Assistance Plan

The Repayment Assistance Plan (RAP) has been in operation since August 2009. The program features two stages. In stage one, borrowers who are unable to make the required monthly payments pay only the principal, and the Government of Canada pays the interest. Payments cannot exceed 20% of the borrower's income. In a 10-year period, this possible interest-free period cannot last more than five years. If, at the end of stage one, a borrower has not repaid the full amount, the government will continue to cover the interest and start to pay a portion of the loan principal. The program is designed to ensure that no student loan debt remains after 15 years of completing their studies (10 years for students with a permanent disability).[192]

4.1.3 — Canada Student Grants Program

In its 2008 federal budget, the Government of Canada announced it would introduce a new Canada Student Grants Program (CSGP) that would consolidate all federal student grants into a single program.[193] The CSGP was introduced in 2009 and encompasses the grants listed below. To be considered for any of these grants, students must have applied and qualified for a

[192] Government of Canada, *CanLearn*, Repayment Assistance Plan, http://www.canlearn.ca/eng/after/repaymentassistance/rpp.shtml, accessed 19 July 2010.
[193] Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *Canada Student Grants Program*, http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada_student_loan/cgsp.shtml, accessed 19 July 2010.

student loan. The grants can supplement the CSLP loan, but "If the grant(s) ... awarded cover(s) more than [the student's] assessed financial need, only the grant will be provided."[194]

Canada Student Grant for Persons from Low-Income/Middle-Income Families: Students from low-income families[195] can receive $250 per month of study for all years of a university undergraduate, college or trade school program, and those from middle-income families can receive $100 per month of study. Eligibility for this grant is automatically assessed when students apply for a loan through the CSLP.

Canada Student Grant for Persons with Permanent Disabilities: Eligible students with a permanent disability who can demonstrate financial need and provide a medical certificate confirming their disability can receive $2,000 annually. This grant is awarded on application and is used to cover the costs of accommodation, tuition and books.

Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Persons with Permanent Disabilities: Under this grant, eligible students can receive up to $8,000 a year to help cover expenses related to their disability, such as tutors, oral and sign interpreters, support services, specialized transportation, note-takers, readers and braillers. Only costs directly related to post-secondary education are eligible.

Canada Student Grant for Persons with Dependants: Students from low-income families with dependants can receive $200 per month of study for each dependant under the age of 12. Like the grants to students from low- and middle-income families, eligibility for this grant is automatically assessed when a student applies to the CSLP.

Canada Student Grant for Part-Time Studies: Part-time students from low-income families can receive up to $1,200 per school year. Eligibility is determined when a person applies for a student loan.

---

[194] Government of Canada, "Students Loans, Grants and Scholarships: Frequently Asked Questions." http://www.canlearn.ca/eng/postsec/faq/index.shtml#g Accessed 17 February 2011.

[195] Eligibility thresholds are reviewed annually and vary depending on the province or territory. Thresholds are posted online at: Government of Canada, *CanLearn*, "Does my Family Qualify as a Low or Middle Income Family?," http://www.canlearn.ca/eng/postsec/money/grants/lmit.shtml, accessed 19 July 2010.

Canada Student Grant for Part-Time Students with Dependants: Part-time students with children under 12 years of age can receive $40 per week of study (if they have one or two children) or $60 per week of study (three or more children). The maximum amount per school year is $1,920. Eligibility is assessed at the same time as the loan application. Students are eligible for this grant only if their assessed need exceeds the requirements for the Grant for Part-Time Studies ($1,200).

4.1.4 — Witnesses' views

While many witnesses were critical of these financial assistance programs, others stated that the financial assistance system seemed to operate well overall. Joshua Mitchell of the Canadian Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators told the committee that "thousands of Canadians attend colleges and universities each year because of the assistance provided through the Canada Student Loans Program, and the provincial and territorial financial assistance programs that supplement it."[196]

Several recent improvements, such as consolidation of the Canada Student Grants Program and the introduction of the Repayment Assistance Plan have been hailed by the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations as innovative and seem to be very popular with students.[197] Katherine Giroux-Bougard of the Canadian Federation of Students told the committee that students particularly like the fact that they receive part of the assistance at the beginning of the school year when they have to pay for tuition, books and rent.[198]

Nonetheless, throughout its examination of the accessibility of PSE in Canada, the committee received several recommendations on ways to these programs. For example, Ross Finnie of the University of Ottawa told the committee:

> *We have done a good job with the post-secondary education student financial aid system. I have been writing on it for a decade now […] We could do better, but we can always do better. The student financial aid system is such that those who want to go can go.*[199]

[196] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell.
[197] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Rick Theis.
[198] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard.
[199] *Evidence*, 8 October 2009, Ross Finnie.

Level of financial assistance and unmet needs

Student associations and financial assistance administrators expressed the following concerns to the committee.

Rick Theis, the Government Relations Officer for the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) told the committee that the level of financial assistance available through the CSLP was not enough to meet the anticipated needs of some students.[200] The cost of a post-secondary education, particularly tuition, has risen steadily, while the maximum student loan of $210 per week has remained the same since 2005–2006.[201] Given the unchanging loan limit, it is anticipated that the number of students with unmet needs will continue to increase, even with the introduction of the Canada Student Grants Program.[202] According to CASA, unmet student needs can vary from a low of $1,191 in Ontario to a high of $5,214 in Nova Scotia.[203] The CSLP updates its needs assessment thresholds infrequently and has not always taken regional differences into account.[204] The committee suggests it is essential for loan limits to be reviewed regularly to keep pace with the cost of post-secondary education and students' needs. This review should be conducted annually and take into account the differences from one province to the next.

Employment income

The federal government expects students to contribute financially to their education. That is why the needs assessment takes into account students' employment income. HRSDC officials told the committee that students can earn up to $50 a week, above which their income was to be used to finance their education, and the federal government's contribution decreases.[205] At the same time, Statistics Canada reports that average weekly earnings during the school year for full-

[200] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Rick Theis.
[201] Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada, *Actuarial Report on the Canada Student Loans Program as at 31 July 2009*, 2010, p. 21, http://www.osfi-bsif.gc.ca/app/DocRepository/1/fra/rapports/bac/CSLP_2009_f.pdf, accessed 20 July 2010.
[202] *Ibid*., p. 24.
[203] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Rick Theis.
[204] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell.
[205] *Evidence*, 29 April 2010, Kathryn McDade.

time students "approached $200 in 2009/2010."[206] Given that a post-secondary degree offers significant financial advantages, the committee agrees that students should contribute to the cost of their education. However, it should be noted that the $50-dollar maximum had not been adjusted for almost 10 years,[207]until the 2011 federal budget, which increased the exemption to $100 per week.[208] Minimum wage in most provinces and territories is more than $9 an hour.[209] Consequently, students who want to supplement the financial assistance they receive by getting a part-time job (or who simply want to gain some work experience) must limit themselves to slightly more than ten hours a week during the academic year.

Financial assistance for part-time students

About 1,400 part-time students (0.005% of all part-time students) apply for a student loan.[210] Budget 2011 increased the income threshold for eligibility for student's loans for part-time students.[211]

This figure represents a very low participation rate and might be explained primarily by the different rules that apply to loans for part-time students. These loans are not funded in the same way as those for full-time students. The government pays the interest on loans for full-time students while they are still in school. However, until changes announced in the 2011 federal budget, in the case of part-time students, the interest accumulated throughout their studies.[212] Under the recent budget changes, the interest rate while students are enrolled in part-time studies is reduced from 2.5 percentage points above prime to 0.[213]

---

[206] Katherine Marshall, "Employment patterns of post-secondary students," *Perspectives*, September 2010, p. 9. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2010109/pdf/11341-eng.pdf
[207] *Evidence*, 29 April 2010, Glennie Graham; *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Rick Theis.
[208] Government of Canada, The Next Phase of Canada's Action Plan: A Low-Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth, 6 June 2011, p. 161. http://www.budget.gc.ca/2011/plan/Budget2011-eng.pdf accessed 6 June 2011.
[209] See: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *Current and Forthcoming Minimum Hourly Wage Rates for Experienced Adult Workers in Canada*, http://srv116.services.gc.ca/dimt-wid/sm-mw/rpt1.aspx?lang=eng, accessed 20 July 2010.
[210] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Rick Theis.
[211] Government of Canada, The Next Phase of Canada's Action Plan: A Low-Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth, 6 June 2011, p. 161. http://www.budget.gc.ca/2011/plan/Budget2011-eng.pdf accessed 6 June 2011.
[212] *Ibid*.
[213] Government of Canada, The Next Phase of Canada's Action Plan: A Low-Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth, 6 June 2011, p. 151. http://www.budget.gc.ca/2011/plan/Budget2011-eng.pdf accessed 6 June 2011.

According to Rick Theis of CASA, the lines of credit offered by financial institutions look more attractive, and many students choose this option to finance their education. However, these students cannot take advantage of federal student grants and the Repayment Assistance Plan because eligibility for these programs is determined during the Canada Student Loan application process.[214]

The complexity of financial assistance

Katherine Giroux-Bougard, National Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students, told the committee that the federal and provincial student assistance programs are complex and varied.[215] The multitude of federal and provincial programs can be combined into more than 100 different loan and grant configurations.[216] Each province and territory has different processes for submitting applications, delivering services, providing information and administering programs. The application process and needs assessment methodology are cumbersome. The amount of funding and the type of funding—grant or loan—vary greatly from one jurisdiction to the next, as do program features such as interest rates, resource thresholds and debt-relief measures.[217] The government recognizes how complex the system is and is working with several provinces to simplify it. As a result, four provinces have integrated their financial assistance programs with that of the federal government.[218] The committee encourages the federal government to continue its efforts to harmonize the various financial assistance programs and to work closely with the provinces and territories.

Some complexity is inevitable given the different resources available to provincial and territorial governments, the variations in the cost of living across the country, and the different political, social and demographic characteristics of each jurisdiction. But the grant and loan application process does not need to be so complicated that it becomes a barrier to students'

---

[214] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Rick Theis.
[215] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard.
[216] Sean Junor and Alexander Usher, *The Price of Knowledge: Access and Student Finance in Canada*, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2002, p. 115.
[217] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell.
[218] Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *About the Canada Student Loans Program (CSLP)*, http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada_student_loan/about/index.shtml, accessed 21 July 2010.

getting the resources they need.[219] Joshua Mitchell of the Canadian Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (CASFAA) described this complexity:

> *The programs are complex and difficult to understand. Frankly, it is easier for me to understand and file my taxes every year than it is to understand and complete a student loan application.*[220]

The committee suggests that every effort must be made to simplify the application process so that students fully understand the criteria for receiving financial assistance and the obligations associated with that loan.

The federal government is aware that the complicated application process poses problems, and presented plans to the committee to address the situation: evaluating the clarity of the language used in the forms, conducting outreach activities with student financial officers at post-secondary institutions, and determining the best way to simplify the process, for example, by making greater use of online services and reducing the number of forms.[221] The committee wishes to emphasize the importance of these activities and encourage the government to involve students and financial assistance officers in its plans.

Lack of program information

The difficulty involved in obtaining information was mentioned earlier in the report. Rick Theis of CASA explained that many loan recipients know very little about federal assistance programs in particular.

> *In a recent survey conducted by the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, CASA, in partnership with the Canada Education Project, students were asked series of questions about their understanding of the financial assistance program offered by the government. In almost every question proffered, either large pluralities or outright majorities of students with student loans were unable to correctly answer basic questions surrounding topics such as interest accrual, non-repayable assistance eligibility, needs assessment criteria and the like.*[222]

[219] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Rick Theis.
[220] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell.
[221] *Evidence*, 29 April 2010, Glennie Graham.
[222] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Rick Theis.

This situation is worrisome. Secondary students can be expected to have even more limited knowledge of financial assistance programs.[223] Secondary school outreach activities are one way of providing them with information about financial assistance programs and procedures.[224] The federal government plans to conduct a pilot project along these lines in British Columbia in the fall of 2010. Representatives are to visit secondary schools to show students how to research post-secondary education courses and access student financial assistance.[225]Committee members were very interested in this project and wanted to be kept informed on developments. As noted earlier in the report, the committee strongly urges all governments to collaborate in increasing information about post-secondary education and financing programs to children and parents in primary and secondary schools.

In addition, as Joshua Mitchell explained, students do not find out how much financial assistance they will receive until a few weeks before the school year begins.

> *It is a difficult position to be in for a low-income family to find out in July or August how much assistance will be available for studies that start in the first week of September.*[226]

The committee does not doubt the goodwill of CSLP officials and suggests that they do everything in their power to ensure loan applications are processed within a reasonable time frame. However, committee members would like to emphasize how important this is to students with limited financial resources.

Debt level

Katherine Giroux-Bougard of the Canadian Federation of Students told the committee:

> *In the fall of 2009, 386,000 students in Canada were forced to go into debt to finance their post-secondary education. Last month, national student debt reached a record high of $13.5 billion, and it continues to rise by $1.2 million a day. That debt only reflects amounts owed under the Canada Student Loans Program and does not include debts*

[223] Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2006, pp. 4–5.
[224] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell.
[225] *Evidence*, 29 April 2010, Glennie Graham.
[226] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell.

> *contracted through provincial aid programs or private student programs.*[227]

Given the high cost of post-secondary education, it is not surprising that many students must finance their studies with loans. According to Statistics Canada data for 2005, 45% of college graduates and 54% of graduates with a bachelor's degree financed their education with student loans.[228] The average debt among borrowers was $13,600 dollars for college graduates and $22,800 for graduates with a bachelor's degree.[229]

The average debt of post-secondary graduates who borrowed doubled from 1990 to 2000 but remained fairly stable from 2000 to 2005.[230] However, several witnesses said that the average debt of borrowers seems to have increased since 2005 and now stands at about $27,000.[231] Marc Frenette, of Statistics Canada linked the increase in student debt to rising tuition fees:

> *[I]n Canada, we have seen rising tuition fees over the last couple of decades. However, as tuition fees have increased, because of the structure of the student financial aid system, which is a direction function of student needs, then student aid has increased. As a result, student debt increases.*[232]

Students appearing before the committee stated that debt has a significant impact on the accessibility of post-secondary education. Joshua Mitchell, President of the Canadian Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (CASFAA), told the committee that "those who are most at risk with post-secondary participation, in particular students from low-income families, first generation students and Aboriginal students, will abandon post-secondary education if their loan debt is too high."[233] A study commissioned by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation also indicated that high levels of annualized debt could deter qualified

---

[227] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard.
[228] According to a recent study, 57% of graduates carry student debt. See: May Luong, "The financial impact of student loans," *Perspectives*, January 2010, p. 6, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2010101/pdf/11073-eng.pdf, accessed 5 July 2010.
[229] Justin Bayard and Edith Greenlee, *Graduating in Canada: Profile, Labour Market Outcomes and Student Debt of the Class of 2005*, Research Paper, Statistics Canada, April 20009, p. 62, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2009074-eng.pdf.
[230] Justin Bayard and Edith Greenlee, April 2009, p. 34.
[231] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell.
[232] *Evidence*, 8 October 2009, Marc Frenette.
[233] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell.

students from completing their programs.[234] On the other hand, experimental studies conducted for HRSDC found that "overall, controlling for other factors, aversion to debt is not an important factor in determining whether subjects (adults aged 18 to 55) will take up higher education financing."[235]

Ben Levin, a professor at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, emphasized that most students do not find themselves with a huge debt once their studies are over.[236] Statistics Canada data confirm that about half of students manage to fund their post-secondary studies without borrowing.[237] In addition, about one-quarter of graduates in the class of 2005 succeeded in fully repaying their loan in the two years following graduation.[238] However, the committee cannot ignore students' concerns about debt. In addition, there is a risk that the high debt levels of some students discourage others from pursuing post-secondary education:

> *Their stories have a high deterrent impact on other students, particularly those students who are least financially secure, and these are the ones most likely to say ''I cannot end up with $30,000 in debt."*[239]

Debt aversion is the one of the most common reasons given by students who never pursued post-secondary education.[240] This situation is more pronounced among students from low-income families:

> *[…] lower income groups are most reluctant to borrow to finance their education. They are the least likely to see the investment value.*[241]

---

[234] Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, *The Impact of Bursaries: Debt and Student Persistence in Post-Secondary Education*. Millennium Research Note #4, 2006, p. 7, https://qspace.library.queensu.ca/bitstream/1974/5759/1/MRN04_Persistence_EN.pdf, accessed 5 January 2011.
[235] C. Eckel et al., "Debt Aversion and the demand for loans for postsecondary education," *Public Finance Review*, 2007, cited in Boris Palameta et al, *Willingness to Pay for Post-secondary Education Among Under-represented Groups,- Report*, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2010, p.8. http://www.srdc.org/uploads/WTP_SRDC_report_EN.pdf (accessed 20 January 2011)
[236] *Evidence*, 5 November 2009, Ben Levin.
[237] *Ibid*.
[238] Justin Bayard and Edith Greenlee, April 2009, p. 31.
[239] *Evidence*, 5 November 2009, Ben Levin.
[240] Malatest, R.A. & Associates, *The Class of 2003: High School Follow-Up Survey*, Montreal, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2007, pp. 21 and 22.
[241] *Evidence*, 5 November 2009, Ben Levin.

It was suggested that a cap be put on the amounts that can be borrowed each year through the CSLP in order to reduce student debt and the impact of debt aversion. Any requirements beyond this limit would be met through grants and other types of financial support.[242]

The introduction of the Canada Student Grants Program represents a significant effort by the federal government to reduce debt. These grants are given to students from low- and middle-income families and reduce the amount that these students have to borrow to cover their education costs. Since the program has been operating for only a year, it is difficult to gauge its success.

It is clear that student assistance levels must be updated regularly to be effective. However, the committee noted that the limits on financial assistance available through the Canada Student Loans Program are not often reviewed. The committee hopes that such will not be the case with the Canada Students Grants Program.

There are other options for reducing student debt besides grants. The committee noted that interest on CSLP loans starts to accumulate once students have completed their studies, although students do not have to start repaying their loans right away. Their debt can increase in the first six months. Furthermore, the interest rate for federal student loans is higher than the prime lending rate.[243] The fixed interest rate is prime plus 5% and the floating rate is prime plus 2.5%.[244] Students might be better off borrowing from a bank than from the federal government.[245] Reduced interest rates should help students repay their loans more quickly.

Issues for students with disabilities

Witnesses highlighted the difficulties that disabled students encounter with federal financial assistance programs. In particular, applicants for a grant for students with permanent disabilities must provide proof of their disability. A medical certificate, psycho-educational assessment or documentation proving receipt of federal or provincial disability assistance are all considered acceptable.

---

[242] *Evidence*, 5 November 2009, Ben Levin.
[243] *Evidence*, 5 November 2009, Ben Levin.
[244] Government of Canada, *CanLearn*, "Interest Rates for Canada Student Loans," http://www.canlearn.ca/eng/after/payingback/inr.shtml, accessed 21 July 2010.
[245] *Evidence*, 5 November 2009, Ben Levin.

Students applying for the Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities are eligible for financial assistance of up to 75% of the costs related to this assessment (maximum of $1,200 dollars).[246] This funding is disbursed only if the evaluation shows that the student has a disability. While some disabilities are quite obvious, others, such as learning disabilities, can be more difficult to prove. Students or their families must therefore pay for the evaluation, which can sometimes cost as much as $3,000, without knowing for certain whether they will receive funding. This presents an obstacle for students with learning difficulties.[247]

In addition, eligibility for a grant for students with permanent disabilities is determined during the student loan application process. If students or their families have too high an income under the CSLP, they are not eligible for a grant.[248] Yet, as we have seen, students with disabilities face additional expenses that are very high. Students who are not eligible for a Canada Student Loan cannot necessarily pay for all the arrangements they must make in order to continue their education. In general, the committee understands why grants are linked to a financial needs assessment. However, in the case of disabled students, the CSLP needs assessment does not allow for the additional costs that students and their families must bear for activities not directly related to education (renovations to make accommodations accessible, purchase of adaptive software, etc.). As a result, they have less money available for post-secondary education. The committee therefore suggests that eligibility for the Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities and the Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities should not be based exclusively on parental income.

Additional costs related to geographic distance

As we have seen, the cost of post-secondary education is higher for students who have to leave their regions to attend school. As mentioned earlier, students living more than 80 km from a post-secondary institution have lower participation rates than those from urban areas. Distance may be an even greater obstacle for students from low-income families:

[246] Information provided by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.
[247] *Evidence*, 15 April 2010, Claudette Larocque.
[248] *Ibid.*

> *On the financial-impact aspects of it in particular, distance to school has a larger impact on youth from low-income families. When you have those two factors working together, distance and low income, this could be a real impediment to those youth attending universities.* [249]

Geographic distance also has an impact on students from Francophone minority communities outside Quebec who want study in French. There are far fewer French-language post-secondary institutions than English-language ones, and they are not distributed evenly across the country.

Although the CSLP takes into account the additional expenses students incur when moving out of the family home, there is no non-repayable financial assistance for these students. The committee is aware that some countries have established grants for this purpose. Australia offers a relocation scholarship[250] for students who have to move away from home to study. Students with low income and few financial resources are eligible for A$4,000 in the first year and A$1,000 in subsequent years.[251]

Canada could add this type of funding to its current series of grants. Only the most disadvantaged students, namely, those receiving the Grant for Students from Low-Income Families, would be eligible.

RECOMMENDATION 12

The committee recommends that the federal government expand the access to post-secondary education provided by its student financial assistance programs, with the following measures that shall take into account the principles and mechanisms found in existing bilateral agreements with the province of Quebec, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut:

---

[249] *Evidence*, 25 March 2010, Richard E. Mueller.
[250] For more information, see: Australian Government, *Relocation Scholarship*, http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/relocation_scholarship.htm, accessed 22 July 2010.
[251] Students must be in receipt of the *ABSTUDY Living Allowance* or *Youth Allowance*. These programs provide support to students whose income is insufficient to meet their needs. For more details, see: Australian Government, *Studying or Training*, http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/individuals/st_index.htm, accessed 22 July 2010.

a) **continue its efforts to harmonize the various financial assistance programs and to work closely with the provinces and territories to accomplish this goal;**
b) **conduct regular reviews of the following limits, taking into account real costs including inflation, and differences among jurisdictions: loan limits; the limit placed on student employment income, and financial assistance limits under the Canada Student Grants Program;**
c) **conduct regular reviews of student aid programs, particularly with respect to their impact on debt and financial capacity compared with the programs they replaced;**
d) **apply the interest exemption under the Canada Student Loans Program during the first six months following graduation;**
e) **reduce student interest rates to prime;**
f) **revise the funding level for disability assessments in order to cover the full cost of the assessment;**
g) **review the eligibility criteria for the Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities and the Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities to ensure they cover the additional costs faced by people with disabilities; and**
h) **establish a relocation grant for low-income students who must leave the parental home to pursue post-secondary studies.**

4.2 — Tax measures

In addition to loan and grant programs, the federal government supports students and their families through various tax measures totalling about $1.6 billion annually.[252] In comparison, the government approves loans valued at close to $2 billion annually.[253] Federal tax expenditures on education include tax credits for tuition, education, textbooks and student loan interest; the scholarship and bursary income exemption; tax deferral of the returns on

[252] *Evidence*, 16 June 2010, Baxter Williams.
[253] Chantal Collin and Daniel Thompson, *Federal Investments in Post-secondary Education and Training*, Publication No. 06-25-E, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, 5 May 2010, p. 3, http://dsp-psd.tpsgc.gc.ca/collections/collection_2010/bdp-lop/bp/06-25-eng.pdf, accessed 23 July 2010.

contributions to Registered Education Savings Plans; and the apprentice vehicle mechanics' tools deduction. Other measures include the transfer of education and tuition tax credits, and the carry-forward of education and tuition tax credits.[254] Table 8 offers an overview of tax credits.

Table 8 – Education Tax Expenditures Related to Personal Income Tax, 2007-2009 ($ millions)

	Projections		
	2007	2008	**2009**
Adult basic education–tax deduction for tuition assistance	$5	$5	$5
Apprentice vehicle mechanics' tools deduction	$4	$4	$4
Tuition tax credit	$250	$265	$255
Education tax credit	$220	$225	$215
Textbook tax credit	$42	$44	$42
Transfer of education and tuition tax credits	$470	$480	$480
Carry-forward of education and tuition tax credits	$380	$405	$385
Student loan interest tax credit	$64	$67	$68
Registered education savings plans	$185	$165	$140
Exemption of scholarship, fellowship and bursary income	$38	$38	$38
Total	**$1,658**	**$1,698**	**$1,632**

Source: Department of Finance, *Tax Expenditures and Evaluations*, 2009, http://www.fin.gc.ca/taxexp-depfisc/2006/taxexp2006_e.pdf.

The three main tax credits target tuition, education and textbooks. According to an expert from Finance Canada, a full-time university student in 2010 who pays $5,000 in tuition could claim $8,720 in tax credits for tuition, education and textbooks. Taking into account other non-refundable credits, the student would be able to earn up to $21,410 before having to pay federal income tax.[255]

These tax credits are non-refundable, which means that students must pay taxes to take advantage of them. However, about 60% of students earn less than $10,000 a year and therefore do not pay taxes.[256] Students can transfer up to $5,000 in tax credits to their parents, grand-

[254] See: Department of Finance, *Tax Expenditures and Evaluations*, 2006, pp. 59–81, http://www.fin.gc.ca/taxexp-depfisc/2006/taxexp2006_e.pdf, accessed 23 July 2010; Chantal Collin and Daniel Thompson, 5 May 2010, p. 13.
[255] *Evidence*, 16 June 2010, Baxter Williams.
[256] Christine Neill, *Canada's Tuition and Education Tax Credits*, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, May 2007, p. 7.

parents or spouses. Unused amounts can be carried forward to a later year. These carry-forward and transfer provisions were introduced in 1997 and 1998 respectively. Expenditures related to these tax measures have more than doubled since the mid-1990s.[257]

4.2.1 — Witnesses' views

The government justifies the use of tax credits by explaining that they are based on students' limited ability to pay income tax and are designed to help families put aside money to help their children with their post-secondary education.[258] However, testimony from financial assistance administrators, many researchers and experts, and witnesses representing students' associations seems to contradict these arguments.[259] According to Rick Theis, from the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, tax credits have little impact on accessibility because they are non-refundable.[260] In fact, most students cannot claim them while in school because their incomes are low during this period. As a result, the funds are not available when they need them most to pay for tuition and living expenses.[261] According to Finance Canada data for 2007, only 37% of tax credits could be used by students in the year in which they were earned.[262]

Secondly, several witnesses indicated that the ability to transfer tax credits was of greater benefit to wealthier students and families.[263] Tax credits are distributed without regard for financial need or family income. This concern is supported by several studies.[264] Approximately 60% of education and tuition credits benefit mainly families with incomes above the Canadian median.[265]

In short, the universal approach to tax credits does not seem to ensure that they benefit under-represented groups. We have seen that far more students from wealthier families pursue

---

[257] *Ibid*., p. 11.
[258] *Evidence*, 16 June 2010, Baxter Williams.
[259] *Evidence*, 5 November 2009, Ben Levin; *Evidence*, 25 March 2010, Dale Kirby; *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell; *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Rick Theis; *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard.
[260] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Rick Theis.
[261] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard.
[262] *Evidence*, 16 June 2010, Baxter Williams.
[263] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell.
[264] Christine Neill, May 2007; Ross Finnie, Alex Usher and Hans Vossensteyn, "Meeting the Need: A New Architecture for Canada's Student Financial Aid System," *Policy Matters*, Vol. 5, No. 7, August 2004, p. 16.
[265] Alex Usher, *Who Gets What? The Distribution of Government Subsidies in Canada for Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, Educational Policy Institute, May 2004, p. 14, http://www.educationalpolicy.org/pdf/who_gets_what.pdf, accessed 23 July 2010.

post-secondary education, particularly at the university level. As described by Joshua Mitchell, if the purpose of the tax credits "is to promote access to groups who typically do not participate and low-income families", then a serious question is on the table of whether or not it is accomplishing that.[266]

Some witnesses suggested that eliminating tax credits would allow for significant funding to be redirected to programs that are much more effective at increasing the accessibility of PSE.[267] However, tax credits may have other laudable goals. By identifying post-secondary education as an investment, tax measures may make the decision to attend college, university or trade school more attractive financially.[268] Carrying tax credits forward improves the return on post-secondary education. Louis-Philippe Savoie, Vice-President of University Affairs and Incoming President of the Quebec Federation of University Students (QFUS), told the committee that students find some tax measures, such as the exemption for scholarship income, particularly attractive.[269] In practical terms, this measure provides grant recipients with access to increased financial resources. It is therefore important to ensure that any overhaul of the tax credit system does not have a negative effect on the ability of other groups, such as the middle class, to access post-secondary education.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The committee recommends that the federal government conduct an immediate review of the effectiveness of all education tax credits in increasing the accessibility of post-secondary education. The review should include an assessment of their effectiveness in increasing participation by under-represented groups and present various options for reallocating ineffective tax credits to other financial assistance programs.

[266] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell.
[267] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Ben Levin; *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard.
[268] Department of Finance, 2006, p. 76.
[269] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Louis-Philippe Savoie.

4.3 — Savings incentives

4.3.1 — Registered Education Savings Plans

The federal government has established several programs and grants to encourage families to save for their children's post-secondary education. The Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) was created in 1974. It enables a subscriber[270] to contribute to an RESP account on behalf of a beneficiary. Unlike the Registered Retirement Savings Plan, contributions to an RESP are not tax deductible. However, the investment income is tax sheltered until the funds are withdrawn to pay for the beneficiary's post-secondary education. The money withdrawn from an RESP becomes part of the student's income. RESP contributions cannot exceed a cumulative total of $50,000 per child.

4.3.2 — Canada Education Savings Grant

The government introduced the Canada Educations Savings Grant (CESG) in 1998 to encourage RESP contributions. The program's rules have been revised several times since its inception. Under the program, the government contributes a grant equal to 20% of annual RESP contributions up to $2,500, regardless of net family income. Since 2005, to encourage low-income families to save, the government grant is calculated at a rate of 40% on the first $500 deposited in an RESP (20% for the next $2,000) if the child's family has a net income of $40,970 dollars or less, and 30% on the first $500 (20% for the next $2,000) if the family's net income is above $40,970 dollars but below $81,941. The maximum grant amount per child is $7,200 over the life of the plan. Every child aged 17 or under who is the beneficiary of an RESP is eligible for the CESG.[271] According to Finance Canada figures, the government contributed $4.4 billion in the form of CESGs between 1998 and 2008.[272]

4.3.3 — Canada Learning Bonds

The federal government introduced the Canada Learning Bond to encourage low-income families to open an RESP. Under the program, families eligible for the National Child Benefit Supplement receive a government contribution of $500 to an RESP for children born after

[270] The subscriber does not have to be the parent of the beneficiary.
[271] Government of Canada, *CanLearn*, "Canada Education Savings Grant," http://www.canlearn.ca/eng/saving/cesg/index.shtml, accessed 29 July 2010.
[272] *Evidence*, 16 June 2010, Baxter Williams.

December 31, 2003. An additional $100 per year is contributed up to age 15. The family must remain eligible for the National Child Tax Benefit Supplement during this period. The maximum government contribution is $2,000 per child.[273]

4.3.4 — Witnesses' views

As in the case of tax credits, the committee received many comments on savings incentives for post-secondary education. As explained by Louis Savoie of QFUS, the primary criticism of RESPs and grants to encourage saving was that these measures tend to benefit wealthier families the most.[274] Like the tax credits, RESPs are available to anyone, regardless of income.[275] Although the CESG and the Canada Learning Bond in particular were introduced to encourage lower-income families to save more, it is the wealthier families that put more money aside and use RESPs in greater numbers. According to the Access and Support to Education and Training Survey, 82.5% of families with incomes of $100,000 or more save for their children's education. Of these families, 76.6% contribute to an RESP. Only 42.3% of families with incomes below $25,000 have saved for their children's education. Of these families, 57.4% contribute to an RESP.[276] According to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), the percentage of the most disadvantaged families that are saving for education has increased. Between 2007 and 2009, the number of children who received a Canada Learning Bond increased to 211,787 from 75,700.[277]

Although the RESP program is of greater benefit to wealthier families, the committee does not want it to be eliminated. To its credit, the RESP program helped to spark debate on the importance of saving for post-secondary education.[278] The RESP is also extremely popular: as Kathryn McDade, Assistant Deputy Minister, Learning Branch of HRSDC told the committee, "In 2009, for a single year, over 250,000 students withdrew about $1.8 billion from their RESPs to support their education."[279] The introduction of the CESG and the Canada Learning Bond demonstrates the federal government's desire to help more of the most disadvantaged families

[273] An extra $25 is paid with the first $500 bond to help cover the cost of opening an RESP.
[274] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Louis-Philippe Savoie.
[275] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell.
[276] Tamara Knighton et al., 2009, p. 66.
[277] Information provided by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.
[278] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Joshua Mitchell.
[279] *Evidence*, 29 April 2010, Kathryn McDade.

participate in the RESP program. HRSDC representatives discussed initiatives to promote federal savings programs to target groups such as Aboriginal people, low-income families and recent immigrants.[280] It should be noted that the Canada Learning Bond is a recent initiative and applies only to children born after 31 December 2003. The program's real impact on accessibility will not be known for about 10 years, when the first recipients move on to post-secondary education.[281]

The committee suggests greater effort must be made to promote this program to low-income families. That being said, awareness is not enough in some cases. As Norman Rowen, Director of Research and Evaluation at Pathways to Education Canada, reminded the committee, some families are simply too poor to contribute to an RESP:

> *[…] the poorest of our families and communities have never been able to take advantage of RESPs or Canada student bonds. It is simply not possible to talk to people in Regent Park about putting aside a few hundred dollars per year for each of several children; it is an impossible task.*[282]

Mr. Rowen offered an alternative solution to help the poorest families participate in the RESP program and benefit from the federal government's attractive grant opportunities. He proposed that charitable organizations be permitted to contribute to RESPs established for the children of low-income families.[283] The committee has not looked at this proposal in sufficient depth and therefore cannot recommend it. However, the committee suggests it is crucial for the poorest families to be able to benefit from the many advantages of the RESP program.

RECOMMENDATION 14

The committee recommends that the federal government examine the possibility of allowing charitable organizations to raise funds intended to contribute to a Registered Education Savings Plan established for a child from a low-income family.

[280] *Evidence*, 29 April 2010, Marc LeBrun.
[281] *Ibid.*
[282] *Evidence*, 9 June 2010, Norman Rowen.
[283] *Ibid.*

4.4 — Canada Summer Jobs

Under the Canada Student Loans Program, students' financial needs are calculated by estimating their education costs and subtracting the financial resources available to them. This formula assumes that students will contribute financially to their education by getting a summer job, for example. It is with this in mind that the federal government operated the Summer Career Placements Program for more than 35 years.[284] In 2007, this program was replaced by Canada Summer Jobs, which provides federal funding to help not-for profit organizations, public-sector employers and small businesses with 50 or fewer employees to create summer jobs for students aged 15 to 30.[285] In 2009–2010, the program helped 37,500 students find summer jobs.[286]

Canada Summer Jobs is very popular with students. According to Katherine Giroux-Bougard of CFS, the jobs made possible through this program "provide good opportunities for students to gain experience outside of the service industry in places closer to home."[287] Getting a summer job is critical for students as it has a direct impact on their ability to pay for their education. Some witnesses stated that the economic crisis resulted in a decline in the number of jobs available to students during the summer of 2009. Statistics Canada reported that the summer employment rate for students dropped from 70% in 2008 to 63% in 2009.[288] Ms. Giroux-Bougard told the committee that this situation affected their ability to pay for their education:

> *As a result of the high unemployment numbers last summer, we have seen an increase in the number of students who have applied for the Canada Student Loans Program. Students in the past who were able to save money for the school year are now applying for the first time, and those who have applied in the past are now applying for greater sums of money to be able to make it through the year.*[289]

Furthermore, having a summer job related to their field of study lets students put into practice what they have learned in the classroom. In particular, several areas of advanced study and professions strongly recommend related summer employment experience to improve the

[284] Chantal Collin and Daniel Thompson, May 2010, p. 18.
[285] Service Canada, *Canada Summer Jobs–Supporting Students: Serving Communities*, Applicant Guide, 2010, p. 3, http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/fra/dgpe/ij/pej/programme/eec/2010/guideapplication/eec2010_guide_demandeur.pdf, accessed 26 July 2010.
[286] *Evidence*, 29 April 2010, Kathryn McDade.
[287] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard.
[288] Katherine Marshall, "Employment patterns of post-secondary students," *Perspectives*, Statistics Canada, September 2010, p. 10. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2010109/pdf/11341-eng.pdf
[289] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard.

skills base and improve opportunities for access to these areas.[290] Canada Summer Jobs benefits students by helping them earn money for their education and gain significant work experience. The committee sees this as an essential program that needs adequate funding. It is interesting to note that the base funding to the program and its predecessor (Summer Career Placements) had increased only slightly over the past 10 years, despite the rise in the number of post-secondary students in Canada.

As part of its Economic Action Plan, the government earmarked $10 million in additional funds per year in 2009 and 2010 for Canada Summer Jobs. In June 2011, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Honourable Diane Finley, announced a permament increase to the program of $10 million annually, which "will create as many as 3,500 additional jobs for students this summer."[291] However, the committee suggests that we need to understand how to create summer employment on a larger scale and on an on-going basis, and encourages the federal government to undertake such research, and implement any mechanisms that will contribute to such an outcome.

4.5 — Financial support for apprentice training

The federal government supports apprentice training in several ways. First, some 60,000 apprentices who are eligible for Employment Insurance (EI) receive benefits during the classroom-related part of their training.[292] In addition, work carried out under an apprenticeship program counts toward eligibility for EI benefits. As a result of recent amendments to EI regulations, apprentices have only one two-week waiting period to serve for the duration of their apprenticeship training.

Secondly, the Apprenticeship Incentive Grant (AIG) provides registered apprentices with $1,000 annually during the first two years of their training program. This grant is disbursed once

---

[290] See, for examples, Jeff Taylor and Amy Smith, "Pharmacy student attitutudes to patient education: A longitudinal study," Canadian Pharmaceutical Journal, September/October 2010, p238 http://www.cpjournal.ca.pinnacle.allenpress.com/doi/pdf/10.3821/1913-701X-143.5.234 or Laura Ryser and Greg Halseth, "Building Student Research Capacity: Faculty Perceptions about Institutional Barriers in Canadian Universities," Research Management Review, Fall/Winter 2009, p.12. http://www.ncura.edu/content/news/rmr/docs/v17n1_BuildingStudentCapacityinRuralResearch.pdf (both accessed 18 January 2011.)

[291] "Speaking notes for the Honourable Diane Finley for the National launch of Canada Summer Jobs 2011," Canada News Centre website. http://news.gc.ca/web/article-eng.do?nid=605229 (accessed 12 July 2011.)

[292] *Evidence*, 29 April 2010, Kathryn McDade.

they have completed the first or second year of their program.[293] More than 145,000 AIGs have been awarded since the program was established in 2007. The government launched a new initiative in the 2009 federal budget: the Apprenticeship Completion Grant (ACG). This program offers a $2,000 grant to apprentices who have completed their training and received certification in a designated Red Seal trade.[294] More than 19,000 completion grants were paid out in 2009–2010.[295] These two grants are taxable, unlike grants to college or university students.

The ACG is designed to encourage apprentices to complete their training. Completion rates for apprenticeship training programs have proven to be very low. Of the 358,555 people registered in an apprenticeship training program in 2007, only 24,495 completed their program that same year.[296]

There are many explanations for the low completion rate. The main one could be that people have a negative impression of the trades and apprenticeship training programs. Paul Cappon, President and Chief Executive Officer the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), told the committee that unlike other countries such as Germany and Austria, it appears that trades are not seen as being socially important, valuable or accepted work in Canada.[297] In fact, a study by Skills Canada and the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) showed that parents do not seem to be encouraging their children to pursue careers in the trades. Shaun Thorson, Executive Director of Skills Canada, told the committee:

> *One of the interesting statistics that came out of that was that 69 percent of parents when asked if they thought skilled trades and technology were valuable careers and if they encouraged their sons or daughters to pursue them, indicated that they did. However, when the children of those parents were asked if their parents had indeed encouraged them to consider those occupations, the percentage dropped down to 28 per cent. Obviously, there is a disconnect there.*[298]

---

[293] *Ibid.*
[294] The Red Seal Program is designed to establish an interprovincial standard of excellence for the skilled trades. More information on the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program is available at http://www.red-seal.ca/c.4nt.2nt@-eng.jsp?cid=22#standards.
[295] *Evidence*, 29 April 2010, Kathryn McDade.
[296] Statistics Canada, "Registered apprenticeship training programs," *The Daily*, 25 June 2009, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/090625/dq090625c-eng.htm, accessed 12 July 2010.
[297] *Evidence*, 7 October 2009, Paul Cappon.
[298] *Evidence*, 28 April 2010, Shaun Thorson.

The committee considers this situation unfortunate and unreservedly supports the work of Skills Canada and the CAF in promoting the trades as a career option. committee members also encourage the government to become more involved in the activities of these two organizations. Canada's economic health depends on it. We have seen that the demand for skilled labour will increase in the coming years. This is particularly true in the trades, since the average age of skilled tradespeople is rising, and more and more of them will be retiring.[299]

Beyond the issue of promoting careers in the trades, Mr. Cappon of CCL said that the main barrier to completing apprenticeship training is the difficulty in finding employers who will give apprentices on-the-job training.[300]

> *[…]enrolments in apprentice programs have never been higher. There has been a huge increase in student demand for enrolment. Part of the problem is graduating from the programs. They are not getting the placements needed.* [301]

According to Allison Rougeau of the CAF, less than 20% of employers who are able to train apprentices do so.[302] It takes an apprentice an average of about seven months to find an employer willing to provide training.[303] Yet hiring an apprentice can be profitable for employers. Over the medium term, employers who participate in apprenticeship programs see an increase in productivity: every dollar that an employer invests in training brings an average return of $1.47 at the end of four years.[304]

The economic situation also influences whether apprentices find work and complete their training. In good economic times, it can be difficult for apprentices to complete their in-school training:

> *When it is busy, employers and apprentices alike do not want to be released to go to the school portion of their training, which is part of the requirement of the entire program. There are X number of hours of on-the-job training and X number of hours of in-school completion. When the economy was busy such as it was in British Columbia and Alberta not long ago, apprentices do not want to go to school, and*

[299] *Evidence*, 28 April 2010, Allison Rougeau.
[300] *Evidence*, 7 October 2009, Paul Cappon.
[301] *Evidence*, 7 October 2009, Herbert O'Heron.
[302] *Evidence*, 28 April 2010, Allison Rougeau.
[303] *Ibid.*
[304] *Ibid.*

> *employers are reluctant to release them because they need them on the job.*[305]

When the economy slows down, the workplace portion of their training is affected.

> *In an economic downturn, apprentices are the first to go; they are often laid off. Therefore, if they are not in the program or working or in school, they often drop out. They may stay in the system; they may be working, but they are not actually completing the program.*[306]

The federal government helps employers support apprenticeships through the Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit. This non-refundable tax credit is equal to 10% of the salary payable to apprentices up to a maximum of $2,000 per apprentice.[307] Despite the financial incentives, businesses still need to understand why training apprentices makes good economic sense.[308] This is particularly true for small- and medium-sized businesses, which do not always have the time or resources to train apprentices.[309]

RECOMMENDATION 15

The committee recommends that the federal government promote the creation of lasting jobs for apprentices and qualified journeypersons through tools for encouraging cooperation with the private sector, including those provided by the Sector Council Programs that bridge between apprenticeship and employment.

---

[305] *Ibid.*
[306] *Ibid.*
[307] Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *Trades and Apprenticeship Strategy*, http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/trades_apprenticeship/index.shtml, accessed 26 July 2010.
[308] *Evidence*, 28 April 2010, Allison Rougeau.
[309] *Evidence*, 28 April 2010, Shaun Thorson.

5 — Research at Post-secondary Institutions

The Order of Reference for this study authorizes the committee to examine the mechanisms used to fund scientific research and development (R&D) at post-secondary institutions. The committee chose to approach the subject from the standpoint of the accessibility of post-secondary education. R&D activities, particularly at universities, are a fundamental part of post-secondary students' experience. Investment in research makes it possible to train more students, improve the quality of their education and ultimately meet the need for a highly specialized labour force throughout the country.

5.1 — Federal investment in post-secondary research

The federal government's involvement in post-secondary education is limited under the Constitution. However, the government is a major player—an essential one, in fact—in the funding of research carried out at Canadian universities. It is also the primary external investor in university research.[310] Federal spending on R&D activities at universities and colleges increased from less than $800 million in 1997–1998 to almost $3 billion in 2008–2009.

5.1.1 — Granting agencies

The vast majority of federal funding for research at post-secondary institutions is distributed through the three federal research councils: the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).[311] The three agencies administer a number of federal programs, some of which are described below. However, grants allocated competitively following a peer review process are the agencies' primary mechanism.

[310] Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *momentum: the 2008 report on university research and knowledge mobilization*, 2008, p. 13, http://www.aucc.ca/_pdf/english/publications/momentum-2008-low-res.pdf, accessed 30 July 2010.
[311] *Ibid*.

5.1.2 — Canada Research Chairs

The Canada Research Chairs program was designed to help Canadian universities attract and retain excellent researchers. The Government of Canada was allocating $300 million a year to establish research chairs.[312] In its June 2011 federal budget, the Government committed $53.5 million over five years to add 10 research chairs, some of which "will be active in fields relevant to Canada's Digital Economy Strategy."[313] The funds come from the three granting agencies, namely, NSERC, the CIHR and the SSHRC. The SSHRC administers the program and houses its secretariat on behalf of the three federal agencies.

Additionally, the 2011 federal budget committed $3 million in 2011-2012, and $5 million annually starting the following year to NSERC to support 30 new Industrial Research Chairs at Canadian colleges.[314]

5.1.3 — Indirect research costs

The federal government covers a large proportion of the cost of research carried out at Canadian universities. However, research activities entail indirect costs that are substantial in many cases. Those costs include operating and maintaining research laboratories, improving safety standards and managing intellectual property.[315] To cover some of the costs, the government launched the Indirect Costs Program in 2001–2002. In 2009–2010, the program had a budget of approximately $325 million and targeted more than 125 post-secondary institutions throughout the country. Budget 2011 committed to an addition $10 million per year, starting in 2011-2012.[316] The program is administered by the SSHRC on behalf of the granting councils, and the secretariat is operated by the Canada Research Chairs program.

---

[312] Canada Research Chairs, *Progress Report – April 2006 to March*, September 2008, p. 7, http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/about_us-a_notre_sujet/publications/briefing_report_%2006-07_e.pdf.
[313] Government of Canada, The Next Phase of Canada's Action Plan: A Low-Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth, 6 June 2011, p. 151. http://www.budget.gc.ca/2011/plan/Budget2011-eng.pdf accessed 6 June 2011.
[314] *Ibid.*
[315] Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage*, 39th Parliament, 2nd Session, April 2008, p. 5, http://www.parl.gc.ca/39/2/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/soci-e/rep-e/rep16apr08-e.htm, accessed 30 July 2010.
[316] Government of Canada, The Next Phase of Canada's Action Plan: A Low-Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth, 6 June 2011, p. 154. http://www.budget.gc.ca/2011/plan/Budget2011-eng.pdf accessed 6 June 2011.

5.1.4 — Research infrastructure

The Government of Canada invests in research infrastructure indirectly through an independent agency, the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI). Established in 1997, the CFI provides support for modernizing research infrastructure at post-secondary institutions. It covers up to 40% of a project's infrastructure costs. The remaining 60% is provided by partners, including private companies and the provincial governments.[317] Since its inception, the CFI has committed approximately $5.3 billion to almost 6,700 projects carried out by 130 research institutions.[318]

In addition, the government invested $2 billion under its Economic Action Plan to create the Knowledge Infrastructure Program.[319] The purpose of the program is to accelerate repairs, maintenance and construction at Canadian universities and colleges, and enhance the research capacity of post-secondary institutions. A total of 536 projects have received funding. Because the program is tied to contributions from partners, the actual amount invested in research facilities and educational institutions nationwide is close to $5 billion (including the funds allocated to the program).[320]

5.1.5 — Graduate and post-doctoral research scholarships

The Canada Graduate Scholarships Program provides scholarships for master's and doctoral students. Master's students are eligible for $17,500 dollars for one year, while doctoral students can obtain up to $35,000 a year for three years. In 2009–2010, more than 3,000 master's scholarships and 1,500 doctoral scholarships were awarded.[321] The program is administered by the research councils. Since 2006, all income from general scholarships and post-secondary scholarships has been tax-exempt.

In 2008, the Government of Canada announced the creation of the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships Program, to attract and retain world-class doctoral students at Canadian

[317] Canada Foundation for Innovation, *CFI Overview*, http://www.innovation.ca/en/about-the-cfi/cfi-overview, accessed 30 July 2010.
[318] Canada Foundation for Innovation, *Brief to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology*, 14 June 2010, p. 1.
[319] For more information about the Knowledge Infrastructure Program, go to http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/696.nsf/eng/home, accessed 30 July 2010.
[320] *Evidence*, 16 June 2010, Robert Dunlop.
[321] *Ibid.*

universities. Canadian and international students are eligible to be nominated for a Vanier scholarship, which is valued at $50,000 per year for three years.[322]

In the 2010 federal budget, the federal government announced the creation of a new post-doctoral fellowship program valued at $70,000 dollars per year for two years. The first fellowships were awarded in 2010–2011, and at maturity, the program will fund 140 fellowships annually.[323] Since the 2010 federal budget, however, post-doctoral research fellowships have no longer been eligible for the tax exemption introduced in 2006.[324] Only research scholarships that lead to a college or CEGEP diploma, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree or a doctorate continue to be exempt.

5.2 — Witnesses' views

5.2.1 — Importance of research in post-secondary education

Throughout its proceedings, the committee could see how important scientific research is to Canada's development. Paul Davidson of the AUCC stated, "the research enterprise […] is fuelling Canada's place in the 21st century."[325] In a report on the federal government's science and technology strategy, the committee already wrote that Canada's position in the knowledge-based economy depended primarily on its performance in the area of science and R&D.[326] Canadian post-secondary institutions are key players. In international comparison, Canada's private sector conducts less research than any other industrialized nation except Italy, and is well behind the leading OECD countries.[327] The onus therefore falls on our universities to fill that void. Federal investments have to be sufficient to meet this challenge.

In this regard, it is important to acknowledge the federal government's efforts to increase funding for research in the post-secondary education sector. The committee notes that funding has more than tripled since 1997. Although one stakeholder expressed concern about the cuts to

[322] Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships, *About the Program*, http://www.vanier.gc.ca/hp-pa-eng.shtml.
[323] Department of Finance, *Budget 2010: Leading the Way on Growth and Jobs*, 4 March 2010, p. 77, http://www.budget.gc.ca/2010/pdf/budget-planbudgetaire-eng.pdf.
[324] *Ibid.*, p. 349.
[325] *Evidence*, 7 October 2009, Paul Davidson.
[326] Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, April 2008, p. 1.
[327] Statistics Canada, Percentage of total research and development by performing sector, 2008," *Education Indicators in Canada: Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program*, April 2011. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-582-x/2011001/tbl/tbld4.3-eng.htm

granting agencies' budgets that were made in 2009 and the modest increases that were announced in 2010,[328]the 2011 federal budget committed to a further increase of $37 million per year, starting in 2011-2012.[329] In comparison, the U.S. government increased funding for its own granting agencies by more than $13 billion.[330]

The committee reiterates the importance of providing adequate funding for research activities at Canadian universities. More specific recommendations are provided below.

5.2.2 — Links between research and training of students

Andrea Balon, National Executive Representative of National Graduate Caucus of the Canadian Federation of Students, told the committee:

> *Graduate students are the drivers of long-term innovation through their research and also go on to become a highly skilled and highly qualified workforce that is needed in a knowledge-based economy.*[331]

In real terms, research carried out in post-secondary institutions has a direct impact on students' experience. According to Pierre Chartrand of CIHR, "[t]he quality of the teaching that is given in the classroom is also very much associated with the teachers having a research background.[332] Moreover, graduate students benefit from investment in quality research infrastructure and have access to state-of-the-art laboratories and equipment. Indirectly, research grants to professors make it possible to hire students as research assistants. These students are not only well paid, but also gain experience related to their field of study and work closely with experienced researchers. Graduate students are an absolute necessity for researchers to conduct their research.[333] Once they graduate and enter the labour market, these students form a highly skilled labour force that contributes to Canada's economic development.

Ensuring that the number of graduate students increases is therefore essential. Enrolment in master's and doctoral programs at Canadian universities was relatively stable through the

---

[328] *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, James Turk.
[329] Government of Canada, The Next Phase of Canada's Action Plan: A Low-Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth, 6 June 2011, p. 154. http://www.budget.gc.ca/2011/plan/Budget2011-eng.pdf accessed 6 June 2011.
[330] *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, James Turk.
[331] *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, Andrea Balon.
[332] *Evidence*, 14 June 2010, Pierre Chartrand.
[333] *Ibid*.

1990s but has increased steadily since 2000. The number of master's students increased from 75,195 in 2000–2001[334] to 82,400 in 2010.[335] The number of doctoral students increased from 26,598[336] to 45,000 over the same period.[337] Enrolment in graduate programs is on the rise, yet Canada seems to be lagging behind other countries in terms of the number of doctoral students who finish their program. The number of graduates is increasing, to be sure, but we are falling behind some countries. Canada ranked last among 17 "peer countries" in a Conference Board of Canada analysis of the number of PhDs per 100,000 population aged 25 to 29, based on 2007 data. [338] In that year, 4,827 doctorates were awarded in Canada.[339] Graduate students' representatives told the committee that increasing the funding available to students should be made a priority in order to boost the number of master's and doctoral graduates.[340] Adequate funding allows students to focus all their effort and energy on their studies and thus complete their program in a shorter period.[341] The Canada Graduate Scholarships Program is the primary source of funding for graduate students. However, Andrea Balon, a representative of the CFS National Graduate Caucus, and the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies agree that increasing the number of graduate fellowships is essential.[342] In its brief to the committee, the Conseil national des cycles supérieurs de la Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec [graduate studies council of the Quebec university students' federation] stated that the Canada Graduate Scholarships Program should have a large enough budget to award scholarships to all students for whom funding is recommended.[343] Each year, Canadian universities recommend to

---

[334] Statistics Canada, "University enrolment," *The Daily*, 14 July 2010, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/100714/dq100714a-eng.htm, accessed 3 August 2010.
[335] AUCC, *Trends in Higher Education*, p. 10.
[336] Statistics Canada, "University enrolment," *The Daily*, 14 July 2010, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/100714/dq100714a-eng.htm, accessed 3 August 2010.
[337] AUCC, *Trends in Higher Education*, p. 10.
[338] Conference Board of Canada, "Education and Skills: Ph.D. Graduates." http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/details/education/phd-graduates.aspx accessed 4 August 2011., http://www.stic-csti.ca/eic/site/stic-csti.nsf/vwapj/08-141_IC_SOTN_EN_Final_no_trans2.pdf/$FILE/08-141_IC_SOTN_EN_Final_no_trans2.pdf, accessed 3 August 2010.
[339] Statistics Canada, CANSIM, table (for fee) 477-0014.
[340] *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, Douglas Peers; *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, Andrea Balon.
[341] Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, *Notes for a Presentation to the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology*, 6 May 2010, p. 2.
[342] *Ibid.*
[343] Conseil national des cycles supérieurs de la Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec, brief titled *L'accessibilité aux études postsecondaires au Canada : le point de vue des étudiants de cycles supérieurs* [*Access to post-secondary education in Canada: Graduate students' perspective*, p. 3], 6 May 2010, p. 4.

the research councils a certain number of students to receive funding. Because budgets are limited, many students get nothing.[344]

Canada Graduate Scholarships are awarded on merit and therefore do not take students' financial needs into consideration. The financial needs of graduate students can, however, be substantial. Master's and doctoral students may have incurred debt as undergraduates.[345] Graduate students are often older and may have dependent children.[346] The cost of graduate studies can be higher for women, particularly for those bearing and raising children. Douglas Peers, President of the Canadian Association for Graduate Students, told the committee:

> *Financial concerns are obviously a big matter, particularly for women. A PhD program typically will take five to eight years, and that time tends to correspond to the time when many women are looking at having a family.*[347]

This is reflected in enrolment in doctoral programs. Women account for 58% of university undergraduates but only 46.8% of doctoral students.[348]

It therefore appears that there is a need for a funding source that is not based solely on merit and takes financial needs into account. Master's and doctoral students can apply to the Canada Student Loans Program. However, they are not eligible for grants for low- or middle-income families.[349] Given the importance of increasing the number of graduate students and the higher cost of graduate school, the committee suggests that it would be preferable to change the eligibility criteria for grants for students from low- and middle-income families.

---

[344] For example, in 2010, the CIHR received recommendations for 1,941 doctoral students but could fund only 930, or 47.9 per cent. See Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, *Competition Statistics*, "Doctoral Awards 2010–2011," http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/results-resultats/stats-statistiques/index-eng.aspx, accessed 3 August 2010.
[345] *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, Andrea Balon.
[346] *Ibid*.
[347] *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, Douglas Peers.
[348] Statistics Canada, "University enrolment," *The Daily*, 14 July 2010.
[349] *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, Andrea Balon.

5.2.3 — Recruiting the best students

The quality of the research carried out at Canadian universities depends to a large extent on the work done by graduate students.[350] It is therefore essential that Canada be able to recruit the best international students and retain this country's brightest students.

Canadian universities are in competition with the world's top universities, and many Canadian students are drawn by other countries, including the United States, where more scholarships and research funds are available.[351] Canada must therefore increase the financial support available to make Canadian programs more attractive.

Canada must also be able to recruit the best international students. With that in mind, the government has made changes to immigration procedures to make it easier to recruit students from other countries. Paul Davidson of AUCC told the committee:

> *The changes to the immigration process have really helped in our ability to attract international students. The fact that students can work while on campus, stay beyond their graduation and, in some cases, identify themselves to be fast-tracked for citizenship are all helpful initiatives.*[352]

However, certain problems persist. In its brief to the committee, the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) stated that cost is one of the biggest obstacles for international students who wish to study in Canada.[353] According to Statistics Canada, international undergraduate students pay on average $15,674 dollars in tuition.[354] By comparison, Canadian students paid an average of $4,917 in tuition in 2009–2010.[355] Over the past decade, tuition for international students has increased 86%.[356]

---

[350] Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, *Notes for a Presentation to the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology*, 6 May 2010, p. 2.
[351] *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, Douglas Peers; *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, James Turk.
[352] *Evidence*, 5 May 2010, Paul Davidson.
[353] Canadian Bureau for International Education, *Submission to the Standing Senate committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology*, 14 June 2010, p. 2.
[354] Statistics Canada, "University tuition fees," *The Daily*, 20 October 2009, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/091020/dq091020b-eng.htm.
[355] *Ibid.*
[356] CBIE, *Canada First: The 2009 Survey of International Students*, 2009, p. 47, http://www.cbie.ca/data/media/resources/20091110_SurveyInternationalStudents_e.pdf.

Not surprisingly, 40% of the 6,000 international students surveyed by the CBIE reported having a problem obtaining money for tuition.[357] The problem is made worse by the lack of financial aid for students: only 4% of the international students surveyed had a Government of Canada loan or grant.[358] Asked what recommendations they would make to the federal government, the respondents said that tuition fees should be reduced and more financial aid should be provided.[359]

Increasing the resources available under the Vanier Graduate Scholarships Program seems essential in order to retain our best Canadian students and recruit the most promising international students.

The committee also suggests that consideration should be given to creating a scholarship program aimed exclusively at international students. The government already administers a number of scholarship programs, such as the Government of Canada Awards, the Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship Program and the Emerging Leaders in the Americas Scholarship Program.[360] These scholarships have different eligibility criteria and target different regions. In the interest of efficiency and to raise the profile and appeal of these scholarships, the committee urges the government to explore the possibility of rolling them into a single program that would encompass a very wide range of countries.

Budget 2011 announced a $10 million commitment over two years, "to develop and implement an international education strategy that will reinforce Canada as a country of choice to study and conduct world-class research."[361] An advisory panel reporting to the Ministers of Finance and International Trade was also announced.[362]

While it is important to attract international students, it is equally important to encourage our students to be mobile so that they gain a wide range of experience. As explained by Karen McBride, President of the CBIE, since national economies are increasingly intertwined, we must

---

[357] *Ibid.*, p. 31.
[358] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[359] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[360] *Evidence*, 14 June 2010, Chris Greenshields.
[361] Government of Canada, The Next Phase of Canada's Action Plan: A Low-Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth, 6 June 2011, p. 165. http://www.budget.gc.ca/2011/plan/Budget2011-eng.pdf accessed 6 June 2011.
[362] *Ibid.*

make it possible for our students to acquire international knowledge and intercultural competencies.[363] However, only a small number of Canadian students participate in exchange programs and take advantage of opportunities to study abroad. Approximately 3% of university students take courses outside Canada during their program.[364] According to the CBIE, the biggest obstacle standing in the way of young Canadians pursuing their education in another country is a lack of funds.[365] It points out, however, that the financial need is not huge and that small grants to cover the cost of an airplane ticket, for example, might be enough to give students more incentive.[366]

The federal government provides financial support for students who wish to study abroad through a number of programs, including the International Academic Mobility Initiative, which has a budget of $3.4 million, and a number of bilateral agreements with partner countries to set up student exchange programs. Since 2008, the research councils have also administered Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplements; these are grants of up to $6,000 for which recipients of a Canada Graduate Scholarship are eligible. The level of funding for these programs is low, however, and the committee suggests that there should be a broader program for all university students, undergraduate and graduate alike.

5.2.4 — Post-doctoral researchers

Douglas Peers, President of the Canadian Association of Graduate Students, told the committee:

> *Post-doctoral fellowships are a critical issue. They are vital to what Canada can do in the knowledge economy and for an innovation strategy.*[367]

Post-doctoral fellows carry out a significant proportion of the research done at Canadian universities. According to this Association, there are approximately 6,000 post-doctoral fellows

[363] *Evidence*, 14 June 2010, Karen McBride.
[364] *Ibid.*
[365] Canadian Bureau for International Education, *Submission to the Standing Senate committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology*, 14 June 2010, p. 8.
[366] *Ibid.*
[367] *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, Douglas Peers.

in Canada, of whom 39% are from another country.[368] A post-doctoral fellowship lasts two to four years and is intended to provide new PhDs with advanced training in research. In most cases, the fellows' source of income is a scholarship or research grant.

Post-doctoral researchers are highly trained professional researchers and can play important roles in advanced research programs and in developing the applications arising from highly innovative basic research. The transfer of knowledge to social and economic benefits to Canadians is essential. It is often critical for knowledge-based innovative companies to be able to access researchers at the post-doctoral level. It is also important for innovative post-doctoral researchers to gain industrial experience. Currently NSERC administers an industrial research program in the amount of $5 million annually. The federal government has recently provided partial funding to a highly innovative pilot industrial post-doctoral program called "Elevate" administered by the Mathematics of Information Technology and Complex Systems and focused in southern Ontario. The funding is available to all disciplines.

Recommendations to the government with respect to funding graduate studies follow:

RECOMMENDATION 16

The committee recommends that the eligibility criteria for grants under Canada Graduate Scholarships for low- and middle-income families be changed so that graduate students qualify. The programs' budgets should be increased accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION 17

The committee recommends that the federal government maintain the Vanier Graduate Scholarships Program so that the program can compete effectively with the world's top scholarship programs.

RECOMMENDATION 18

The committee recommends that Industry Canada review existing industrial post-doctoral fellowship programs, especially the "Elevate" program, with a view to identifying "best-practice" examples and expanding support for such programs.

[368] Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, *Notes for a Presentation to the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology*, 6 May 2010, p. 2.

5.2.5 — Research at colleges and small universities

R&D activities are not limited to university graduate programs. The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) points out that applied research and the development and marketing of technology are part of a college's mandate. The ACCC believes that colleges are best equipped to ensure that the results of basic research conducted at universities are transferred to and applied by small- and medium-sized businesses in Canada.[369] Colleges are positioned at the development, commercialization and knowledge transfer stages of research.[370]

Few federal programs are designed to encourage college research. The College and Community Innovation Program "supports applied research and collaborations that facilitate commercialization, as well as technology transfer, adaptation and adoption of new technologies."[371] The program funds are allocated through competition in order to build the applied research capacity of colleges and promote technology transfer to industry. The program has a budget of $48 million over five years. In the 2010 federal budget, the government pledged to add an additional $15 million a year starting in 2010–2011.[372] As noted above, the 2011 federal budget committed to the creation of industrial research chairs at Canadian colleges. In addition,

> *Federal budget 2011 allocates a further $12 million over five years, starting in 2011–12, to NSERC's Idea to Innovation program to support joint college-university research and development projects with promising commercialization potential.*[373]

The ACCC and Polytechnics Canada both recommended to the committee that a bigger share of federal R&D funding be made available to colleges and technical institutes.[374] More

---

[369] Association of Canadian Community Colleges, *Applied Research at Canadian Colleges and Institutes*, May 2006, p. 1, http://www.accc.ca/ftp/pubs/brochures/2006_a-research.pdf, accessed 5 August 2010.
[370] Association of Canadian Community Colleges, *Partnerships for Productivity and Advanced Skills: The Role of Colleges in Canada's Innovation System*, February 2010, p. 4, http://www.accc.ca/ftp/pubs/studies/201002researchbackgroundpaper.pdf, accessed 5 August 2010.
[371] Industry Canada, *College and Community Innovation Program*, http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/fte-fte.nsf/eng/00031.html, accessed 27 April 2010.
[372] Department of Finance, *Budget 2010: Leading the Way on Growth and Jobs*, 4 March 2010, p. 67, http://www.budget.gc.ca/2010/pdf/budget-planbudgetaire-eng.pdf, accessed 27 April 2010.
[373] Government of Canada, The Next Phase of Canada's Action Plan: A Low-Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth, 6 June 2011, p. 159. http://www.budget.gc.ca/2011/plan/Budget2011- eng.pdf accessed 6 June 2011.
[374] Polytechnics Canada, *Submission to the Senate committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology*, 11 June 2010, p. 4; Association of Canadian Community Colleges, *ACCC Submission to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology*, 5 May 2010.

specifically, Terry Anne Boyles from ACCC told the committee that 5% of federal funding should be dedicated to this purpose.[375]Funding for colleges and institutes pales in comparison to the approximately $3 billion that the federal government invests in university research. The committee is of the opinion that the research carried out at colleges and technical institutes makes a positive contribution to students' experience and fosters the learning and the development of applied research competencies.

In the June 2011 federal budget, the federal government committed itself to increased funding for such applied research, though the Industrial Research Assistance Program administered by the National Research Council. This announcement was for

> *$80 million in new funding over three years for a pilot initiative, delivered through the Industrial Research Assistance Program, to support collaborative projects between colleges and small and medium-sized businesses to accelerate their adoption of information and communications technologies.*[376]

RECOMMENDATION 19

The committee recommends that 5% of federal funding for pure and applied research be allocated to colleges and technical institutes to develop and commercialize products.

The committee suggests that one of the keys to increasing the number of PhDs is to generate interest in graduate studies and research among undergraduates. At Canada's biggest universities, undergraduate students have the opportunity to be introduced to research by joining a research team that has received grants and by working with established researchers. At smaller universities, exposure to research can be more of a challenge for undergraduates. Smaller universities seem to have more difficulty obtaining grants from the research councils and funds from the Canada Research Chairs program.

There are some programs designed to attract undergraduate students to research. One example is the undergraduate research scholarship program established by NSERC, which

[375] *Evidence*, Terry Anne Boyles, 5 May 2010.
[376] Government of Canada, *The Next Phase of Canada's Action Plan: A Low-Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth*, 6 June 2011, p. 150. http://www.budget.gc.ca/2011/plan/Budget2011-eng.pdf accessed 6 June 2011.

enables students to work in a university laboratory or with a private company for four months.[377] In order to take advantage of these opportunities, students have to be part of a project managed by a professor who has received an NSERC grant. In addition, the student's scholarship must be supplemented by other sources of funding, such as NSERC research grants.[378] This suggests that the various sources of funding are in most cases inter-related.

In its brief to the committee, the Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne notes that the mechanisms used to fund research seem more often than not to disadvantage Francophone universities outside Quebec, many of which are small. The association summed up the situation as follows:

> *[…] the mechanism for allocating investments risks increasing the gap between Anglophone institutions and those of the Francophone minority. The recent example of the Vanier Scholarships is instructive in this regard. Five hundred doctoral scholarships of $50,000 a year are awarded to Canadian and foreign students to reward excellence in research. The awarding method used by the granting councils is based on the last Canada Research Chairs calculations, that is to say funding amounts received for the 2003-2004, 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 fiscal years. However, the number of Canada Research Chairs has also been allocated based on the ability of the institutions to obtain research funding from the main granting agencies. Every initiative thus appears to mechanically increase the gap a little more.*[379]

The committee suggests that smaller universities have a role to play in generating interest in research among undergraduates. However, current funding mechanisms do not seem to make their task easy.

RECOMMENDATION 20

The committee recommends that the federal government, through the granting agencies, conduct a review of the allocation mechanisms used by the various research funds in order to ensure that smaller universities are not disadvantaged.

---

[377] *Evidence*, 14 June 2010, Margaret McCuaig-Johnston.
[378] Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, *Undergraduate Students Research Awards Program*, http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/UG-PC/USRA-BRPC_eng.asp, accessed 5 August 2010.
[379] Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne, brief to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 5 May 2010, p. 9.

5.2.6 — Indirect research costs

As the funds allocated to the federal research councils have increased, indirect research costs have risen significantly. The government recognizes these costs and has invested heavily to help universities cover them (see section 5.1). The Indirect Costs Program covers only some of the indirect costs generated by the research funded by the federal granting agencies. Moreover, universities have to assume the indirect costs related to grants from non-governmental sources. Between 1996–1997 and 2006–2007, those costs increase from $1.1 billion to $1.7 billion.[380] Universities often have to dip into their other budgets in order to cover them. The result is that there is less money to support the universities' teaching role. The committee looked at this issue in 2008 as part of its study of Canada's science and technology strategy. If Canada is to compete internationally, direct research grants to universities should cover 40% of these costs.[381]

RECOMMENDATION 21

The committee recommends that funding for indirect research costs be increased to an internationally competitive level of 40% of direct grants.

[380] Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *Trends in higher education, Volume 3: Finance*, 2007, p. 24, http://www.aucc.ca/_pdf/english/publications/trends_2008_vol3_e.pdf, accessed 5 August 2010.
[381] Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, April 2008, p. 6.

6 — The Role of the Federal Government

One of the recurring themes the committee encountered was how the federal government's role in post-secondary education is defined. We came to the same conclusion as the Special Senate committee on Post-Secondary Education did in 1997: "We found that there is an almost universal demand for a continuing and enhanced federal presence in Canadian post-secondary education."[382] In this section, the committee wishes to address the federal government's role in improving access to post-secondary education.

6.1 — The Canada Social Transfer (CST)

The previous chapters have shown that the federal government has been a key player in funding post-secondary education in Canada. It supports students through various financial aid programs and funds university research. However, to understand the breadth of the federal government's commitment to PSE, we must examine another mechanism: the Canada Social Transfer (CST).[383] It is "a federal block transfer to provinces and territories in support of post-secondary education, social assistance and social services, and early childhood development and early learning and childcare." [384] The CST is now calculated on a per capita basis.

The government publishes information about the notional allocation of the CST. In theory, of the $11.1 billion allocated to the CST in 2010–2011, just over $3.4 billion should go to PSE (see Table 9). However, provincial governments are free to use the funds transferred to them through the CST as they see fit.[385] They are not accountable to the federal government for these funds.

---

[382] Special Senate Committee on Post-Secondary Education, December 1997.
[383] The Canada Social Transfer is a relatively new program. Prior to its existence, the federal government transferred PSE funds to the provinces through a wide variety of mechanisms that were modified frequently. The committee's goal is not to explain the evolution of the CST in detail, but rather to examine the impact the current mechanism has on the accessibility of PSE.
[384] Department of Finance, *Canada Social Transfer*, http://www.fin.gc.ca/fedprov/cst-eng.asp, accessed 5 August 2010.
[385] *Evidence*, 16 June 2010, Chris Forbes.

Table 9 – CST Cash Support ($ millions)

	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Support for children	850	1,100	1,133	1,167
Post-secondary education	*2,435*	*3,235*	*3,332*	*3,432*
Social programs	6,202	6,202	6,388	6,579
TOTAL	**9,487**	**10,537**	**10,853**	**11,179**

Note:Totals may not add due to rounding. Does not include funding of $250 million for development of child-care spaces in 2007–2008, as the funding was provided outside the CST in that year, and does not include the 2007 and 2008 federal budgets transition protection payments.
Source: Department of Finance, 2010.

The committee studied the impact of the CST on post-secondary education and heard from many witnesses on the subject. Two issues came up repeatedly: funding for the CST and provincial accountability.

The provincial and territorial governments receive significant amounts through the CST. However, many witnesses agreed that the federal government's contribution to PSE funding was insufficient.[386] This issue can be traced back to the mid-1990s. At that time, the federal government's efforts to stabilize public finances led it to make significant cuts to transfers to provincial and territorial governments. These cuts had an impact on the accessibility of PSE and, more specifically, on tuition fees. Statistics Canada reported that tuition fees in undergraduate programs rose 34% between 1995-1996 and 2001-2002, taking into account inflation; the increases were substantially higher in professional programs.[387] Students today assume much more of the cost of their education. According to a recent TD Bank report, tuition fees represent 34.2% of university revenue, while public funding represents 57.1%. In 1980, these figures were 13% and 83.9%, respectively.[388] As Louis-Philippe Savoie of the Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (QFUS) suggested to the committee, it seems as though the most

[386] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard; *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Louis-Philippe Savoie; *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, James Turk.
[387] Kathryn McMullen,, "Tuition fee deregulation: Who pays?" *Education Matters*, Vol. 3, No. 1, April 2006. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2006001/9183-eng.htm (accessed 19 January 2011).
[388] Don Drummond, Craig Alexander and Shahrzad Mobasher Fard, *Post-Secondary Education is a Smart Route to a Brighter Future for Canadians*, 17 May 2010, p. 7.

effective tool at the federal government's disposal to stop rising tuition fees is to ensure an adequate financial base for PSE.[389]

In 2008, the federal government increased the amount of the CST earmarked for post-secondary education by allocating an additional $800 million. As of 2009, an annual escalation factor of 3% has been in effect for the entire CST.[390] Despite these investments, the federal government's contribution to funding PSE through transfer payments is lower than it was in 1994.[391] The QFUS said that there is still a $3.5-billion shortfall in federal transfers to the CST.[392] This figure is attributed to the Quebec Ministry of Finance in the following table:

Table 10 - Evolution of the amount of the shortfall at the level of the CST for Canada ($ millions)[393]

	Level of the CST at the Canadian scale	Gap in relation to the 1994-1995 level	Gap in relation to the level of 1994-1995 with inflation
2005-2006	8 415	-2 231	-4 919
2006-2007	8 500	-2 146	-5 037
2007-2008	9 487	-1 159	-4 318
2008-2009	10 537	-109	-3 528

Source: MFQ 2006-2007

While the implementation of a 3% escalator in the federal commitments in 2009-2010 can help narrow the gap as long as inflation remains below 3%, it would take more than a decade to close, even with only a 1% inflation rate throughout.

[389] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Louis-Philippe Savoie.
[390] *Evidence*, 16 April 2010, Chris Forbes.
[391] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Louis-Philippe Savoie.
[392] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard; *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Louis-Philippe Savoie; *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, James Turk; *Evidence*, 5 May 2010, Terry Anne Boyles.
[393] Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec, "Notice on Federal Transfers," August 2009, p. 18. http://www.feuq.qc.ca/IMG/pdf/0910_-_casp_-_transferts_federaux_-_pierre-roy_-_en.pdf (accessed 18 January 2011)

The committee urges the federal government to allocate a significant portion of this increase to post-secondary education, and to encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to use these funds to increase access for under-represented groups.

Restoring PSE funding through the CST is only a temporary solution. In fact, the financial resources required to continue to meet the needs of PSE will in all likelihood increase. TD Bank estimates that the required public funding of PSE institutions will increase by 4% to 5% annually until 2016.[394] Ideally, the federal government should consider increasing CST funding over the medium term.

We cannot discuss the CST without addressing accountability. Currently, as noted above, provincial governments do not have to account for how they spend the funds they receive through the CST. The Department of Finance told the committee that it is up to the provincial governments to determine their priorities:

> *The nature of the overall transfer and the allocation recognizes that while there is a shared priority put on this funding, in the end provinces and territories have the responsibility. The provinces are best placed to do specific program designs and priority settings. That leaves them with flexibility within the entire social envelope and then within post-secondary education to determine what is the best way to use that funding.*[395]

Several witnesses indicated that this approach promotes a lack of transparency. As noted by Terry Anne Boyles, Vice-President, Public Affairs of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, since provincial governments are free to spend the money as they see fit, accountability to Parliament is nearly impossible.[396] Katherine Giroux-Bougard of the CFS explained that a provincial government could receive large sums through the CST, but still decide to cut the budget for post-secondary education.[397] And James Turk, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers told the committee that the federal government may have a hard time agreeing to increase the CST without any assurance that the funds will actually be used for PSE.[398] To address this problem, a number of witnesses suggested that the government set up a transfer for PSE only. It could be included in federal legislation on post-

[394] Don Drummond, Craig Alexander and Shahrzad Mobasher Fard, May 2007, p. 16.
[395] *Evidence*, 16 June 2010, Chris Forbes.
[396] *Evidence*, 5 May 2010, Terry Anne Boyles.
[397] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard.
[398] *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, James Turk.

secondary education. Mr. Turk and Ms. Giroux-Bougard both recommended that to receive this new PSE transfer, provincial governments would have to respect certain conditions, as is the case with the *Canada Health Act*.[399]

The committee suggests that provincial jurisdiction over education must be respected. Nonetheless, we believe that the federal and provincial governments, working together, could determine what, if any, conditions might be associated with such a designated fund.

This would allow the two levels of government to work together to ensure that the monies earmarked for PSE are used effectively. To further that end, the committee also suggests implementing a pan-Canadian PSE strategy and establishing a forum in which the provinces, territories and the federal government can discuss the key issues and harmonize their efforts.

6.2 — National strategy on the accessibility of post-secondary education

Over and over again, witnesses commented on the complexity of PSE and the lack of coordination in Canada. Paul Cappon of the CCL told the committee "there exists no national post-secondary system or strategy in Canada".[400] Canada is one of the few Western countries that do not have a national legislative framework governing PSE.

The committee suggests the federal government has an important role to play in co-ordinating the efforts of the provinces, territories and PSE institutions in order to improve access to post-secondary education. Without a concerted effort, this will be impossible.

6.2.1 — Setting targets

PSE stakeholders agree that accessibility is a very important issue. All the witnesses who appeared before the committee also agreed that it is essential to improve access to PSE. However, the committee members noted that there was no shared commitment with clear targets among the provincial, territorial and federal governments, PSE institutions, student associations or Aboriginal organizations. In order to increase the participation of under-represented groups across Canada in PSE, the committee suggests that this type of commitment is absolutely necessary. Everyone must work together toward the same goal.

[399] *Evidence*, 6 May 2010, James Turk; *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard.
[400] *Evidence*, 7 October 2009, Paul Cappon.

A first step in that direction would be to set targets for increasing participation in PSE in Canada and improving participation ratios. Other countries, including Australia, the United Kingdom and other member countries of the European Union, have set ambitious targets. The committee suggests that setting targets for increasing PSE participation rates, including those for under-represented groups, is an essential part of a national strategy.

6.2.2 — Data collection

Setting targets is pointless unless there is a system in place to measure progress and our ability to meet these targets. At this time, Canada does not have a standardized data collection mechanism that would allow us to measure progress. Statistics Canada and CMEC are working together to compile data and make them available to the public.[401] This is a very important project, and Ms. Giroux-Bougard went so far as to recommend that Statistics Canada's resources be increased in order to improve its ability to do its job.[402]

The committee agrees that it is difficult to access comparable data across Canada. The committee heard from Patrice de Brouket, Chief, Educations Indicators and Special Projects at Statistics Canada, that while university data are relatively easy to find, college data that can be compared between provinces are much rarer.[403] We must significantly improve our capacity to gather data and generate relevant statistics nationwide. As the President and CEO of the CCL told the committee, the centre of a national PSE strategy must include a coordinated data collection strategy and the development of common benchmarks.[404]

6.2.3 — Recognizing and transferring credits

Several witnesses brought up an important issue in Canada that has been resolved in European countries. While members of the European Union have committed to building a common higher education area and a European credit transfer system through the Bologna Process, Canada is lagging behind in such matters within its own borders. It is particularly difficult for Canadian students to have credits earned in one province transferred to another.[405]

---

[401] *Evidence*, 7 October 2009, Patrice de Broucker.
[402] *Evidence*, 22 April 2010, Katherine Giroux-Bougard.
[403] *Evidence*, 7 October 2009, Patrice de Broucker.
[404] *Evidence*, 7 October 2009, Paul Cappon.
[405] *Evidence*, 10 June 2010, Tony Bates.

Transferring credits between provinces is not the only issue: it is also very difficult to have credits recognized from one level of education to another. Some witnesses mentioned that they would like to see universities recognize the knowledge and skills acquired in college programs or vocational schools.[406] Other witnesses said that collaboration between institutions at different levels is not always easy.[407] However, the committee also heard from witnesses of progress being made in that direction: Lori Van Rooijen,Vice-President, Advancement at Athabasca University and Thomas Chase, Vice-President (Academic) and Provost of Royal Roads University, told the committee that institutions in Alberta and British Columbia are co-ordinating credit recognition within each province.[408] Ideally, knowledge acquired outside the classroom would also be recognized.

6.2.4 — On-line learning

In 1997, the Special Senate committee on Post-Secondary Education recommended that the federal government and the provinces develop "a national program to test the potential of new information technologies for enhancing quality and improving access in post-secondary education." [409] Since then, the technology supporting distance and online learning has continued to improve. Yet more than 10 years later, Tony Bates, President and CEO of his own consulting firm dealing with on-line learning, told the committee that "the element that is really lacking, compared with Australia, the U.K. and even the United States, is that we do not have a national strategy to support e-learning or the use of technology in teaching."[410]

The committee heard testimony from two Canadian institutions relying on technology as an important element of their delivery: Royal Roads University which combines on-line learning with brief but intense on-campus learning, and Athabasca University, which relies exclusively on online teaching, though sometimes combined with use of facilities local to students, such as laboratories. Lori Van Rooijen of Athabasca University described how information technologies are used to increase access to PSE:

---

[406] *Evidence*, 25 March 2010, Dale Kirby; *Evidence*, 10 June 2010, Lori Van Rooijen.
[407] *Evidence*, 28 April 2010, Anne Burns; *Evidence*, 28 April 2010, Andrew Cochrane.
[408] *Evidence*, 10 June 2010., Lori Van Rooijen and Thomas Chase.
[409] Special Senate Committee on Post-Secondary Education, December 1997.
[410] *Evidence*, 10 June 2010, Tony Bates.

> *Distance learning education continues to lead the sector as the increased accessibility it provides merges with the new information and communication technologies, ICT. New learning environments include such things as wikis, blogs, podcasts and three-dimensional simulations. Together, they represent a significant shift in learning, and one that needs to be available to all Canadians if we are to maximize learning and also have the innovative workforce that we need in this country.*[411]

Thomas Chase of Royal Roads University told the committee that allowing students to remain in their home communities has made graduate programs accessible for Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia's interior and northern Aboriginal communities.[412] The committee suggests that online and distance learning can improve the accessibility of PSE for Aboriginal and other under-represented groups. Students from small communities who are sometimes reluctant to leave to attend a PSE institution and people whose jobs, location and family obligations[413] also benefit from technology-enhanced distance learning.[414]. Francophone students who are distant from French-language post-secondary institutions can access PSE through on-line French-language programs of Athabasca University and Télé-université du Quebec, TÉLUQ.[415] Lastly, distance education can give students with disabilities an opportunity to pursue PSE without leaving their homes.

6.2.5 — Funding research on the accessibility of post-secondary education

Our knowledge regarding the accessibility of PSE has increased a great deal in the last few years. While our focus had been on financial barriers for some time, we now know that non-financial factors such as preparation for PSE and family environment are also important.[416] However, we were able to arrive at this conclusion only through research and experimentation. A number of witnesses stressed that it is important to continue to invest in research on the

---

[411] *Evidence*, 10 June 2010, Lori Van Rooijen
[412] *Evidence*, 10 June 2010, Thomas Chase.
[413] Lisa C. Priebe et al., "Exploring the Role of Distance Education in Fostering Equitable University Access for First Generation Students: A phenomenological survey," *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, Vol. 9, No. 1, March 2008, p. 1, http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/viewArticle/452/996, accessed 9 August 2010.
[414] Patrick Fahy et al., "Preferences of Residents in Four Northern Alberta Communities Regarding Local-Post-Secondary Programming," *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, Vol. 10, No. 3, June 2009, p. 11, http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/673/1302, accessed 9 August 2010.
[415] *Evidence*, 10 June 2010. Lori Van Rooijen,
[416] *Evidence*, 8 October 2009, Ross Finnie.

accessibility of post-secondary education. We still have a lot to learn about the factors that determine access to PSE.

Before its mandate ended, the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (CMSF) was one of the key players funding research on the accessibility of PSE. The committee did not look at CMSF scholarship programs since the government had already announced that the CMSF's mandate would not be renewed when the committee began its study. The committee members suggest that the federal government, in concert with provincial and territorial governments and other funders, encourage continued research into access to PSE, to provide a solid basis for future initiatives to improve access.

6.2.6 — Funding for projects targeting non-financial obstacles

In the preceding chapters, our recommendations focused on financial barriers to PSE. In fact, most federal programs target financial barriers. However, we have learned that non-financial factors are also very important. Many of these factors involve the student's family situation and performance in elementary and high school. Several witnesses said that we must act earlier, before PSE[417]. However, the federal government does not have a lot of leeway in this regard. Although early intervention is important, it must be recognized that elementary and high school fall under provincial jurisdiction.

In the 2010 federal budget, the federal government demonstrated its intention to address non-financial barriers to PSE by announcing $20 million in funding to support Pathways to Education Canada.[418] First implemented in 2001 in Toronto's Regent Park community, the Pathways program[419] is an early intervention program that aims to lower the high-school drop-out rate and increase participation in PSE for students with a low family income. in inner-city communities Pathways to Education offers a wide variety of free support services to help young people focus on their studies and manage the day-to-day challenges that sometimes get in the way of achieving success. The Pathways approach focuses on supporting young people at home

[417] *Evidence*, 8 October 2010, Ross Finnie.
[418] Department of Finance, March 2010, p. 67.
[419] Information on this program is taken from a report by the Standing Senate committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology entitled *In from the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness*, December 2009, pp. 207–208, http://www.parl.gc.ca/40/2/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/citi-e/rep-e/rep02dec09-e.pdf, accessed 9 August 2010.

and in the community, where youth spend the greater part of their day, and where they are tempted by the greatest number of distractions that could pull them off course. The approach is community based: the program staff work with the community, school and household to develop the right supports for youth in each community. It provides tutoring, mentoring and orientation services, as well as financial support, to young people and their families in lower-income neighbourhoods.

The committee is familiar with this program, having heard the testimony of Norman Rowan, Director of Research and Evaluation for Pathways to Education Canada. The committee suggests that it is important for the government to fund innovative projects that look beyond strictly financial barriers to address a variety of factors that are often interconnected. For this reason, the committee was very pleased that the federal government chose to support Pathways to Education.

Many other pilot projects and community programs are being tested across the country. They do not all receive government support, but that does not mean they are not of interest. Scott Huldane, CEO of YMCA Canada, told the committee that much can be learned by examining these projects and sharing best practices.[420] The committee suggests that the federal government should establish an envelope to fund pilot projects, community programs and programs run by PSE institutions that aim to increase the accessibility of PSE. This envelope should also include funding to evaluate the impact of the programs. According to Jean-Pierre Voyer, CEO of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, this type of evaluation is far too rare in Canada.[421] The committee suggests that the federal government should play a role in funding pilot and demonstration projects in order to identify the best approaches and share this information with stakeholders. By so doing, the provinces and territories, which are in a better position to act at the elementary and high-school levels, will be able to benefit from the findings.

RECOMMENDATION 22

The committee recommends that the federal government work with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, to develop and implement a national strategy for post-secondary education that includes the following:

[420] *Evidence*, 9 June 2010, Scott Haldane.
[421] *Evidence*, 9 June 2010, Jean-Pierre Voyer.

a) **the removal of postsecondary education funding from the Canada Social Transfer and the creation of an independent Canada Education and Training Transfer to ensure that there is dedicated funding for postsecondary education and training;**
b) **general targets for participation in post-secondary education and specific targets for under-represented groups;**
c) **a standardized data collection and reporting mechanism for monitoring and evaluating progress toward the participation targets;**
d) **a national credit-recognition program between colleges and universities, and between institutions in different provinces;**
e) **wider use of the prior learning and skills recognition process when establishing eligibility criteria for post-secondary programs;**
f) **a national plan to support online learning and integrate new technologies in post-secondary education;**
g) **increased funding for research into the factors that influence participation in and completion of post-secondary education;**
h) **a budget envelope to fund pilot projects and rigorous evaluations of approaches to increasing access to post-secondary education for under-represented groups. and for sharing the best practices among them;**
i) **a strategy to promote technical training and the trades; and**
j) **based on success in enhancing the accountability of a dedicated PSE Transfer account, the Federal government consider increasing the Transfer funding using the 1994 levels as a target.**

7 – Conclusion

Throughout its study, the committee received input from many witnesses who believe deeply in the importance of post-secondary education for the future of Canada. Their analysis of the situation and their recommendations guided the committee in preparing this report. The committee sincerely hopes that they are heard not only by the federal government but by all stakeholders involved in post-secondary education.

This report has highlighted a situation that is well documented but often ignored in the public policy debate on post-secondary education. The accessibility of post-secondary education depends on many factors, financial obstacles being only one. To increase post-secondary participation rates by under-represented groups, we will need to focus on all factors, financial and otherwise. Young people's experience in primary and secondary school plays a role, as does the family environment. However, we must not forget the issue of student finances. As many witnesses reminded us, students from low-income families are still under-represented in post-secondary institutions. It is therefore essential that governments continue to invest in generous financial assistance programs and that the recommendations to improve the financial assistance system be taken into consideration.

The provincial and territorial governments are clearly in the best position to take action on many of the issues influencing access to post-secondary education. However, the committee has proposed that the federal government play a leadership role in co-ordinating the efforts of all concerned. It is time to put aside jurisdictional rivalries and work together to ensure that all Canadians who want to benefit from a post-secondary education are able to do so. It is important for all of the under-represented groups we have discussed, but especially for Aboriginal peoples, whose presence on our university campuses is all too scarce. This situation is widely known; it is time to take action.

APPENDIX A

Witnesses

Thursday, March 25, 2010	
As an individual	Dale Kirby, Assistant Professor, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Faculty of Education
Association of Canadian Community Colleges	Patricia Lang, Member
Statistics Canada	Richard Mueller, Senior Analyst, Social Analysis Division
Wednesday, March 31, 2010	
As an individual	Dave Snow, Researcher, Macdonald-Laurier Institute for Public Policy Jane Preston, Ph.D. candidate, University of Saskatchewan
Caledon Institute of Social Policy	Michael Mendelson, Senior Scholar
Centre for the Study of Living Standards	Andrew Sharpe, Executive Director
Wednesday, April 14, 2010	
Assembly of First Nations	Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, National Chief
Congress of Aboriginal Peoples	Betty Ann Lavallée, National Chief Roger Hunka, National Bilateral Director
Gabriel Dumont Institute	Lisa Wilson, Program Director
Métis National Council	Marc Leclair, Senior Policy Advisor
Thursday, April 15, 2010	
Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education	Yolaine Ruel, Past president Gordon Dionne, Secretary Treasurer
Human Resources & Skills Development Canada	Nancy Milroy-Swainson, Director General, Office for Disability Issues Glennie Graham, Senior Director, Canada Student Loans Program
Learning Disabilities Association of Canada	Claudette Larocque, Director of Public Policy and Programs
Quebec Association of Post-Secondary Students with Disabilities	Yolanda Munoz, Coordinator

Wednesday, April 21, 2010	
As an individual	Teresa Abada, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Western Ontario Robert Sweet, Professor Emeritus, Lakehead University Miles Corak, Professor, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa
Thursday, April 22, 2010	
Canadian Alliance of Student Associations	Rick Theis, Government Relations Officer
Canadian Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators	Joshua Mitchell, President
Canadian Federation of Students	Katherine Giroux-Bougard, National Chairperson
Quebec Federation of University Students	Louis-Philippe Savoie, Vice-President of University Affairs and Incoming President
Wednesday, April 28, 2010	
Canadian Apprenticeship Forum	Allison Rougeau, Executive Director
Canadian Association for University Continuing Education	Andrew Cochrane, Past President
National Association of Career Colleges	Anne Burns, Executive Director
Skills Canada	Shaun Thorson, Executive Director
Thursday, April 29, 2010	
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada	Kathryn McDade, Assistant Deputy Minister, Learning Branch Marc LeBrun, Director General, Canada Education Savings Program Martin Green, Director General, Workplace Partnerships Directorate Catherine Adam, Director General, Aboriginal Affairs Glennie Graham, Senior Director, Canada Student Loans Program
Wednesday, May 5, 2010	
Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne	Kenneth McRoberts, President Christophe Kervégant-Tanguy, Director General
Association of Canadian Community Colleges	Terry Anne Boyles, Vice-President, Public Affairs

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada	Paul Davidson, President and Chief Executive Officer
Thursday, May 6, 2010	
Canadian Association for Graduate Studies	Douglas Peers, President
Canadian Association of University Teachers	James Turk, Executive Director
Conseil national des cycles supérieurs de la Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec	Olivier Beaulieu-Mathurin, President
National Graduate Caucus	Andrea Balon, National Executive Representative
Wednesday, June 9, 2010	
Pathways to Education Canada	Norman Rowen, Director of Research and Evaluation
Project SEUR	Louis Dumont, Director, University of Montreal
Social Research and Demonstration Corporation	Jean-Pierre Voyer, President and CEO Heather Smith Fowler, Senior Research Associate
YMCA Canada	Scott Haldane, President and CEO
Thursday, June 10, 2010	
Athabasca University	Lori Van Rooijen, Vice-President, Advancement
Royal Roads University	Thomas Chase, Vice-President (Academic) and Provost
Tony Bates Associates Ltd	Tony Bates, President and CEO
Monday, June 14, 2010	
Canadian Bureau for International Education	Karen McBride, President
Canadian Institutes of Health Research	Pierre Chartrand, Ph.D., Chief Scientific Officer and Vice-President, Research Portfolio
Citizenship and Immigration Canada	Erica Usher, Senior Director, Geographic Operations
Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada	Chris Greenshields, Director, International Education and Youth Division Jean-Philippe Tachdjian, Deputy Director and Trade Commissioner, Edu-Canada International Promotion of Education in Canada
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada	Margaret McCuaig-Johnston, Executive Vice-President
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada	Gisèle Yasmeen, Vice-President, Partnerships

Wednesday, June 16, 2010	
Department of Finance Canada	Chris Forbes, General Director, Federal-Provincial Relations and Social Policy Branch Baxter Williams, Director, Personal Income Tax Division, Tax Policy Branch
Industry Canada	Robert Dunlop, Assistant Deputy Minister, Science and Innovation Sector